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THE SOVEREIGNTY OF CHARACTER



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THE SOVEREIGNTY OF CHARACTER

LESSONS IN THE LIFE OF JESUS

BY

ALBERT D. WATSON

AUTHOR OF

'LOVE AND THE UNIVERSE, THE IMMORTALS, AND OTHER POEMS'

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INTRODUCTORY

WHEN the world gets a true perspective of a great character it frames the portrait and hangs it in the galleries of time to inspire with its perfect beauty the hearts and lives of each succeeding generation.

If our highest good is to be found in the fullest development of all our capacities and powers, how absorbing the interest that life must awaken which did realize the complete expression of all its powers.

It is not surprising that the fairest flower God ever planted in the garden of human life should be so perennially attractive to the souls of men. We never tire of Jesus. Thoughts about him may not be approved, but his own thoughts are always sure of appreciation. A careful and sympathetic examination of the records of his life will inevitably transform a conventional, theological, or intellectual conception of that life into a tender and reverent love.

Our theme has been approached here necessarily from the human viewpoint and with the attitude of loving discipleship.

The chronological order has been observed as likely to increase the value of these pages to students and teachers of the Gospels.

In some cases a slight liberty has been taken with the authorized text at the head of these lessons. The author did not care to adopt the full text of *The Twentieth Century New Testament*, and yet wished to make the quotations modern. It will be found in every case that such variations make the narrative more vivid, or, at least, clearer to the mind of the reader.

If this picture of Jesus should appeal to any as having the elements of just such a human life as God would have us live ; if it convinces that Jesus aimed to transform our lives into the image of God's life of love and holiness, and make them true expressions of our Father's mind and heart, the author will be satisfied.

Learning of Jesus and living in the light of his Word, we shall not fail of strength, courage, and fidelity in this life in the concrete, and beyond all this we shall have an inspiring consciousness of the beginnings of a larger experience in the life which has no boundaries.

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BIRTH AND BOYHOOD

THE GENERATION OF JESUS

The generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.—MATT. i. 1-16.

DESCENT from Abraham is significant, but it was a greater glory to be an ancestor of Jesus than to be a son of Abraham. Jesus changed the life and thought of the world out of all proportion to the result naturally to be expected from his heredity or from the traditions of his people. Nevertheless, we must not conclude that Jesus was not profoundly influenced by these. No doubt the great law of evolution was related to his life in quite the usual way. That this law, as generally understood, is insufficient to explain his character and being is no more than can be said in a general way of any life, but this law is not rightly understood. It means more to the moral and spiritual life of the race than has been suspected.

The unique facts in Jesus' life must not be separated from the others and alone regarded as divine. The less understood features of his life are not more sacred because they are not understood. They are not a supplement ; they are not added

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on. The others are not secular. When we better understand this theme we shall know that the highest human is divine, and the highest divine is human. Meanwhile, we must not set a wide chasm between the common and the unique in any life. We must not allow the fact of miracle to separate Jesus from other men, much less must we permit it to separate one part of his nature from another. We have too often made a deep gulf between what we have arbitrarily named the secular and the sacred, the natural and the supernatural, the human and the divine. There is nothing secular but that which we curse with our irreligion ; to us, there is nothing sacred but those things into which we carry the Spirit of Love and reverence and moral beauty.

Unless we set out with a simple understanding of Jesus as the descendant of David and Abraham, as one into whose nature and being were gathered all the impulses and inspirations which a noble ancestry and a profoundly spiritual environment could produce in a perfectly obedient heart, we shall greatly complicate our view of his life and teaching, rendering it unfruitful, where otherwise we should be profoundly moved to stronger faith and larger endeavour in the fields of experience and attainment.

There is, perhaps, no fact more frequently reiterated in the Gospels than this, that Jesus was the Son of Man. Yet this beautiful and strangely necessary title of our Lord has been used so often that it has been worn smooth, and means nothing to the average reader. Why did Jesus so often call himself the Son of Man ? The term is a Hebraic synonym for " man," and although it has since been

used exclusively in reference to Jesus, its primary meaning gives important suggestiveness to many a text. Thus Jesus declared that "Man has power on earth to forgive sins," that "Man is master of the Sabbath," that "Man came not to be served but to serve," and "to give his life for society." These sublime truths gain a magnificent sweep of comprehensiveness by being understood in the more general way as referring to all men. It is clear, however, that before they can realize their responsibility in these things, men must be conscious that they are of God's family and partakers of His life and disposition.

Jesus, when speaking to other men, seldom referred to himself as being the Son of God. He never hesitated to do so when in communion with God. Eighty-one times in the Gospels he is called the Son of Man. He claimed sonship of David and Abraham. He did not set himself above men and look down upon them. He rather stood among them, asking them all to look up. He never abased man; he exalted him. He is forever one of ourselves, yet he is the life and light of men. This he never could have been had he not been the Son of Man. Much less could he have been what he was to the world had he not been also the Son of God. He invites us to think of him as our brother and our friend, partaking of our nature and sharing with us the sonship of God and all the glorious heritage of humanity.

The Hebrews were an example to every modern people in that they looked for a deliverer from among themselves. Every Hebrew mother yearned

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to be the mother of the Messiah. Had Israel not looked for a redeemer he would not have been born of that race. Had not each Hebrew mother, and especially had not Mary, greatly desired to give birth to the perfect man, Jesus would not have longed to be the Messiah, a fact which should give every modern parent food for thought.

In every land deliverers are needed. Are we ready to put into operation those conditions which shall work out the salvation and perfecting of the race? We think salvation is completed and we quit the work; we say inspiration is ended and we fail of inspiration.

To be true to Christ is to join him in his work, making it ours. We must be saviours of the world; we must open our lives to God's Spirit, and be and do all that God wills. Let us be a righteous nation, and our country shall be a Holy Land. Let us ourselves be sons of God, obedient and true, and thus share as fellow-workers with Jesus the glorious task of making disciples of all nations.

BIRTH

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem.—MATT. ii. 1.

Have you ever allowed the romance, the pathos, the tragedy of this little village to saturate your heart?

Thirty-six hundred years ago a caravan of asses, bullocks, and possibly camels, laden with merchandise, made its way down the Bethlehem road,

which was only a pathway, for waggon roads came into use under the Persians at a later date. In that caravan was the Hebrew boy, Joseph, destined to save Egypt by his wisdom, and to become its Grand Vizier. How the captive youth must have wept as he thought of his father's exile from home at a similar age.

A few years later a humbler caravan went down the same road. In sorrow—almost in despair—the brothers of Joseph were conveying the young Benjamin down to Egypt. The asses trudged along the dusty path with no burden of merchandise upon their backs, only some presents for the Grand Vizier. As they came near to Bethlehem, Benjamin, with a wistful outlook, espied the lonely grave of his youthful mother, Rachel, much beloved, but early lost, who died in giving him birth. Joseph, too, had seen the spot when he was taken down to Egypt, and doubtless he wondered how much of the indignation of his brothers and of the cruelty with which they were treating him was due to the fact that he was the firstborn son of the only wife whom his father truly loved.

Seventeen hundred years later, in the vicinity where Benjamin was born and where Rachel, dear to every lover, died, a greater than Benjamin came to earth-life. The birth of Jesus is the most perennially important fact of history. The sun dips his red, round rim behind the western line at Bethlehem, and darkness settles solemnly upon a Christless world. Next morning as his rays slant like banners down the caravan road, and spread their light over the fields and gables of Bethlehem, the whole scene

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is a perfect symphony of peace, and no truer music was ever rendered, for here in his manger cradle lies the Prince of Peace, who has taken upon his great eternal soul the tender beauty of an infant form.

This day we give our beautiful gifts to our loved ones, for God gave to us this day His unspeakable gift, Jesus, the perfect expression of God's life. Life is an outrush of divine, unconquerable love. Every day He gives us of His life unfailing, His life abounding, palpitating with a holy passion of love and joy, yet serene with infinite peace.

It is said that wise men came with gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh, adoring the Child. We shall never know how many of these traditions of the early days of Jesus were reflections backwards of the later wonders which marked his marvellous career. In any case, love is the only great significance of any gift or labour or work that love inspires. Without love, the gift, the toil, the eloquence are nought.

The child escaped the cruel edict of Herod the Great by flight into Egypt. The stay there was short, for Herod died in the same year in which Jesus was born—4 B.C. as we reckon time. Herod Antipas succeeded as tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, and Archelaus as King of Judaea. It appears that Joseph and Mary intended to have remained in Judaea, but wisely choosing to live under Herod Antipas, the founder of Tiberias and Bethsaida, rather than under his brother Archelaus, who was second only to his father in cruelty, they turned aside into Nazareth of Galilee, which, indeed, was their former home. Josephus does not mention the

massacre of the children under Herod the Great, but we can readily believe that he who murdered his wife in the same year that he founded the temple which bore his name, was capable of any cruelty. So the family of Joseph went back to Nazareth under the rule of Herod Antipas, "that fox," who afterwards beheaded John, the cousin of Jesus, to please a wicked woman, and, still later, saw Jesus himself in chains and—did not care.

We have referred to the family of the Herods because they were associated with incidents in the life of the child whose development we are now studying. We return, with a feeling of relief, to him who so naturally, yet with such perfection of development, strength of moral conviction, and decisiveness of action, gave to the human race a demonstration of the power to live in perfect obedience to the will of God.

PRECOCITY

All that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.—LUKE ii. 47.

Was Jesus a theological and philosophical prodigy—an encyclopaedia—when he had physically only a dozen years behind him? Such a prodigy would not win the universal admiration of human hearts as Jesus has done. In children simplicity is more lovable than intellectual genius.

Jesus was intensely alive to the foundations of religious life. He could not have been more so had

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he been born of the tribe of Levi. He wanted to learn all about the deeper experiences of the soul and to attain to the higher consciousness at the earliest possible period of his development. It is unlikely that he saw all these matters as clearly as a university professor might be expected to do, however, and his early interest in them was rare only in degree. Many a child at twelve is alert with eager heart in all things pertaining to the Unseen. Of such children Jesus was easily the chief.

How much we have missed by not knowing what questions were asked at this time. No doubt Jesus would ask difficult questions. Children generally do. Then the answers would be almost as interesting as the questions. Did their answers satisfy Jesus? If not, he would ask further and more searching questions. All who heard were astonished at his intelligence. On the other hand, the interview must have greatly illumined the youthful mind of Jesus. Had he been entirely dissatisfied with the doctors, he would doubtless have forsaken the synagogue at an early date. But this he did not do. He found in the synagogue the home of much that his soul craved; it was the place where the word of the law was read. The covenant with Abraham was preserved in the ark in the holiest place, like the shrine in the inmost chamber of other temples, and was here read to the people. This was the emblem, if not the authority, of the Jewish faith, and no doubt the promise of God to Abraham was to Jesus most sacred and venerable. Possibly at twelve years he would be ready to receive some traditions which.

at a later period, he would renounce. For he, in his later ministry, did not accept the authority of the Scriptures on a verbal basis. He was disposed even in the case of morality to base its authority upon another foundation, for he says : “ Why even of yourselves judge ye not that which is right,” and “ It hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you,” etc.

Jesus must have been satisfied by the teachings of the rabbis, at least to some extent, else he would not have gone to Jerusalem so early in his ministry with the hope, apparently, that the heads of the church in that city would espouse the cause of which he was the exponent.

Many unwarranted views as to the miraculous nature of this interview have probably been derived more or less directly from the twenty-first chapter of the apocryphal Gospel of the Infancy, the source of many another superstition regarding the early life of this sweetest and sanest of children. Jesus is indeed God’s eternal standard of childhood and manhood, to which the whole race must ultimately conform. There was nothing abnormal about Jesus. His life from boyhood to the cross was greatly simple. No doubt he developed rapidly, but he also developed normally. The obedient are normal ; it is the disobedient who depart from the highest standard and so develop abnormally. Jesus was the standard of childhood for all times. But this will appear more clearly as we proceed.

DEVELOPMENT

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.—LUKE ii. 52.

The fact that Jesus grew in wisdom and in grace should prevent us from thinking of him as unnatural in his development. Why then, if he was not abnormal, was he so different from other men? The difference, so far as we can discover it, is in conduct and character, in spirit and in life. Others fail to measure up to the divine standard of manhood. Jesus is that standard. But why are others inferior? Some would say it is because Jesus is supernatural. Now it is true that Jesus was supernatural if we limit nature to the realm of physical science; but such a division of life and nature is very crude. There is a supernatural in the natural, and there is no natural without the supernatural. Those who think they explain when they say he was supernatural merely hide the seat of their ignorance in the brushwood of terminology. They deem it natural that plants should grow and crystals organize into beauty and symmetry, that planets should move in mathematical orbits and chemical affinities appear. There are those who claim that even spiritual affinities and moral issues have always a physical method and causation, that even life is chemical. Is, then, chemistry explained? Let those who thoroughly understand these things start a new method of nature for themselves. The power to organize the particles in a crystal as accurately as a captain forms the members of his company,

the triumphs of intellect and will, the raptures of the emotional nature, all the mysterious movements of the human soul within the range of consciousness, and the still more mysterious unconscious workings thereof—all these, while not unnatural, are still altogether astonishing, miraculous and divine. Indeed the whole universe is miraculous, and all life is essentially supernatural.

We cannot ignore the fact that Jesus was very different from other men. The difference was of a moral and spiritual nature. He lived on a higher plane and understood some spiritual laws to us unknown. To say he was divine does not account for this, for in some respects we too are essentially divine. To us of the twentieth century, the statement that his birth was miraculous is no explication of his perfections, even to those who fully believe the record. All vice does not reach a man through his last father, nor all virtue through his last mother. Every man has many fathers and mothers. What shall we do with those inferior qualities which heredity brings to a man through his mother from a thousand generations of his imperfect ancestors. The attempt to explain this by the theory that the soul is derived from the father and the body from the mother is not justified by the facts.

The record is that he learned obedience by the things that he suffered, a very common and effectual way of learning. But he was made perfect through his sufferings. He learned his lessons so thoroughly they did not need repeating. He developed rapidly from a humble boy into a mechanic of Nazareth, a teacher of Israel, the Messiah of the Jews ; then, as

the triumphant consciousness of divine power swept as a great inspiration into his lofty soul, he lifted up before the whole world the banner of salvation.

Only by perfect obedience could such progress be made. Such obedience is obligatory upon every son of man. Responsiveness to the still small voice within, the voice of God in the soul, is necessary if we would be all that we may, all that we ought to be. To listen to that voice and obey is to be greatly good. I know no other cause of the excellence and perfection of Jesus.

Yet his character was so perfect that he satisfies the heart of humanity. His faith was so large that he gave to all the eager centuries a basis of joyful hope and trust in a God of fatherly qualities, of truth and love. His spiritual vision was so clear that he could do things which seemed to suspend or to invalidate physical laws.

Whatever mysteries may have been involved in his nature and being, it seems that all the beauties of his life and character, all the matchless powers of his spirit were developed as a result of his absolute responsiveness to the divine voice within his soul. He gave Love right of way in his life and lived straight out from God.

It may seem a far stretch up the steep slopes of attainment to where he walked, but when we know, as we do, that God's love can concentrate into a single moment, even in our own experience, all the intensity of the eternities, and bring within the compass of our vision and intelligence all the illimitable reaches of infinite life, who can doubt that a perfect obedience on our part would bring every one of us

at length into the same glorious heights of experience where Jesus walked, and give us a similarly clear insight into the cosmic and spiritual harmonies.

Far up the mount of beauty
Fair stands the city wall ;
The gates of God are open,
And life is free to all.

Abounding life, unmeasured,
Is theirs and theirs alone
Whose lives are clearly sounding
The universal tone.

Jesus is the pioneer in this heavenly pathway. He is our perfect guide in all those spiritual high-roads hitherto by us untrodden, wherein we yet must walk.

To what loftier object could we offer our highest regard ? To what nobler pattern could we shape our lives and characters ?

SPECIAL PREPARATION

BAPTISM

It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.—MATT. iii. 15.

BAPTISM was a symbol of purification among the Hebrews. They were a formal people. Some of their forms were tedious and without vital meaning. Jesus always disparaged such forms. Baptism, however, was a simple and appropriate symbol of purification enjoined on the ancient church, a most fitting and beautiful emblem of the holy life to which Jesus called his disciples, and he heartily approved it. In his own case the symbol of purification was not needed, for there it could not symbolize the act of purifying, but only the fact of purity.

As a symbol of moral purity baptism had its value, even in the case of Jesus. The awakening under the preaching of John was an introduction to the greater mission of Jesus, and it was becoming that Jesus should inaugurate his missionary career with some public announcement. His baptism was appropriate in this relation.

“I indeed baptize you with water; he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire.”

There is no record that Jesus himself ever baptized

with water. He regarded baptism as a beautiful and solemn symbol of a clean life under the cleansing fire of the Spirit. Jesus always used the symbol of fire, and not that of water, as a cleanser. The latter cleanses the outside of the object, but fire transforms it, makes a new chemical substance, adds new elements and almost makes a new creation. Fire is, therefore, the true symbol of cleansing in the Christian teaching, and if Christ himself were instituting a symbol, doubtless fire and not water would be used. But water was already in use, people were accustomed to it as a symbol, and as every ordinance was non-essential, Jesus permitted water to be retained as a symbol.

While a thousand and one sects have based their constitutional existence upon this or that non-essential theory or form, the existence of these sects can be justified only by the service they perform, and some of them do accomplish a large amount of most excellent work. No soul, however, is likely to be lost for the lack of form or theory, but only for the lack of willing obedience to the word and spirit of God.

Let us seek the constant baptism by fire, that vital, spiritual process which alone can fit us for the service of the Kingdom, and make us gladly obedient to the will of God.

IN THE WILDERNESS

Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness
to be tempted of the devil.—MATT. iv. 1.

The wilderness life with its temptation is a feature in the history of every progressive soul. At some stage or other of our upward way we are confronted with the question, "Shall I trust the powers of earth, relying on them as instruments with which to accomplish my God-appointed work, or shall I venture on spirit wing to soar into the unseen atmosphere and trust only the inspirations and powers of God's supporting life?"

In the mental wilderness, that state of bewilderment caused by lack of light and experience as to moral and spiritual courses, the defining line between right and wrong is extremely hard to determine, and we have to learn to distinguish between right and wrong by giving instant obedience to every slightest prompting of the Spirit's voice. This voice will also warn when we are wrong. Indeed, it is probable that most of us learn more from prohibitive warnings than from affirmative promptings.

The temptation in the wilderness was a temptation to do miracles, to use methods to which the divine voice within did not give consent. Jesus deprecated all miracles of the spectacular sort throughout the rest of his life, regarding as of an inferior order that faith which could believe only because of his miracles. Such faith was sensuous and not vital, of the head and not of the heart.

There is no evidence that Jesus hesitated when the whole truth was clear to him, but he spent nearly six weeks in clearing up the spiritual horizon so that the way might be plain before him, for even Jesus could not always act wisely and rightly without first gaining such a distinct vision of truth and right.

“Command that these stones be made bread.”

Jesus would not subvert God's law to any degree. This is the law of human life, that man shall co-operate with God, sharing His work so that he may also share His life, the spiritual life. Jesus knew that the highest purpose of human toil was not to get bread, but to get the bread of life, to have a share in the life of God. So he answered, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” He would not enter by byways into the garner of the Father. He would not live by means that are not open to his disciples.

“All these things will I give to thee if thou wilt worship me.”

Jesus may have been tempted to come to the end of his mission by other means than those which the simple, direct life of a perfect man afforded. Military force, stratagem, diplomacy, a hundred expedients, may have tempted him as being short cuts to the goal. But no trick or craft, not even the over-mastering might of miracle would Jesus use to lay violent hold of the minds and hearts of the people. He knew that none of these could serve the highest human interest when used in this way. He knew that never thus could he measure up to the divine standard. He answered, “It is written, ‘Thou shalt worship God only.’ ”

“ Then, cast thyself down.” Perchance the crowds of people that throng the temple courts, when they see thee fall unhurt upon yonder stone pavement, will believe thee to be the Messiah. Then thou shalt have their allegiance.

But again, the answer comes : “ Thou shalt not try the Lord by trusting that He will save a fool in his foolhardy feats.” Jesus would work no miracle for spectacular display.

We must not suppose that Jesus allowed any infernal being, real or mythical, to carry him bodily from the temple towers to the mountain summit. This was a spiritual conflict waged on the battle-field of his own consciousness. Only thus can we understand it at all. Only as such can it help us.

Thus Jesus demonstrated the fact that mere diplomacy and strategy always fail, that nothing ever wins in this life or in any other, but direct, honest, pure and true living, and this always wins and never fails.

Had Jesus yielded to the temptation to resort to force, only one result could have followed, viz. that which happened under Titus forty years later. Had he cast himself from the temple battlement, he would have been killed. Had he bowed in homage to any being less than God he would have ceased to be the Christ.

THE FIRST DISCIPLES

He called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.—
LUKE vi. 13.

About this time, Jesus left Nazareth to reside in Capernaum. In other words, he moved to the city. The best men are raised in the country, but go to the city sooner or later. The city is a larger field and gives fuller scope for great activities, yet it is true that no great man is more than two generations removed from the country.

Capernaum was the hub of commercial Asia, the rendezvous of the great caravans from Asia Minor, Babylonia, Persia, and Egypt. To the north, on a clear day, old Hermon unveiled his snow-white head, and beyond, from the foothills of Anti-Lebanus, Abana and Pharpar flow eastward to Damascus. Westward thirty-five miles was The Great Sea in the midst of the Ancient World.

But the chief local interest of Capernaum was its fisheries. The Sea of Galilee was the chief fishing ground of Northern Palestine. Here many a prosperous fisherman earned his livelihood and was content.

Among the more prosperous of these people was a firm of which Simon seems to have been the head, with Andrew, his brother, and Zebedee's sons, James and John, as partners in the business. It may be assumed that the firm was prosperous because in addition to the four partners (Luke v. 10) they employed Zebedee and other hired servants (Mark

i. 20). The principals in this firm of fishermen all became Apostles of Jesus.

Four disciples followed Jesus and believed in him from the first. Andrew brought his brother Simon, and Philip introduced Nathanael, or Bartholomew. There may have been a fifth, even at this early date. John gives us the only record we have of the facts, and he probably omits his own name, in keeping with his well-known modesty. This was not, however, a call to the apostolate. It was after the first Passover that he called Andrew, Peter, James and John from their boats on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was immediately before the second Passover that Matthew was called and made a feast for Jesus. Not till some time after the second Passover did he choose the twelve apostles.

It will be seen from this fact that there were probably only six or seven disciples with Jesus at the well of Sychar, or plucking corn in the fields of Galilee, or at Matthew's feast in honour of Jesus.

He who to any extent identifies himself with the truth is sure to feel the necessity of imparting it to others in a systematic way. To this end, discipleship, either formal or informal, is necessary. How essential this was in the case of Jesus we all know, for we could not possibly have had the Gospels without this provision for the instruction of Gospel writers. There was also the necessity for witnesses of the ideal in the practical, as Jesus manifested it. The value of these powers as vested in the Apostles was clearly realized no later than the time of Paul, who claimed an interview with Jesus "out of season" as a seal to his apostolate.

Jesus, in choosing the twelve, did not look for rich men like Joseph of Arimathea, nor for learned men like Nicodemus, but he chose plain, blunt men without literary ability ; men who would not give more attention to form than to subject matter ; men without special training in the schools of the rabbis, who, therefore, would not fail to see the grandeur of simplicity. He chose men who could trim a ship, or cast a net, or collect the taxes ; men who knew the life of men. Certain qualifications were necessary in an apostle. He must be a witness to the resurrection and have an immediate personal relation of discipleship. The latter was omitted in the case of Paul, who was regarded as an apostle, though not one of the twelve. To the unprejudiced, the misfortune of Paul in this matter was a personal loss and a real detriment to his teaching, as any one will see who will fairly compare the epistles of Paul with the Gospels. A third requisite was that the apostle must have been personally chosen and called by the Master himself to the apostolate.

It is significant that in every list of the twelve given in the New Testament Peter's name is the first and Judas' the last mentioned. Judas seems to have been the only man from Judea, all the rest being men of Galilee. The characteristics of the leading apostles are well known. All save John, if we replace Judas with Matthias, witnessed with their lives the truth they uttered, and died as martyrs of the cross.

What infinite attractiveness was in Jesus to secure the adherence of these stolid men ! What fulness of divinity, to warrant their discipleship !

His "follow me" was the call of eternity. His voice was more subtle than finite sound, and a perfect music trembled in the silence when he ceased to speak. There was that in his presence which suggested a personality greater than the boundaries of his physical being, which hallowed the place where he was, which transfigured those rude fishermen and changed their prudent misgivings into nobly heroic purpose.

One would scarcely suspect the presence of a lofty idealism in the souls of these Galileans, yet, when Jesus had inspired them, they ranked with the most glorious idealists of the race. We should not expect the gleam of the sea, the beauty of field or forest, or the glory of cloud or billow to effect more than a momentary change of mood in minds so unpoetical as these may have been, but Jesus with the influence of his word and life transformed and transfigured them, body, soul and spirit.

It is hard to break away from the past, to put the past and all its interests behind the scenes, and to enter the arena of a new life. It is the part of a hero to repent and permanently to reform. Conservatism, however fine a virtue, becomes at length a hard shell through which the new creation must break its way when it hears the eternal clarion of progress and attainment. That call is ever coming to one or another of us, and it has its own peculiar meaning in each case. One it calls to industry, another to sobriety, another to purity, another to a new field of operation; but it calls in every case to freedom, in fuller and more perfect expression.

Israel was stifled by a hypocritical conservatism,

which found final authority in this or that unreasonable mandate of traditional law, in one or another decadent dogma of the rabbis. Jesus perceived that new inspiration was needed in the personal and national life of Israel. He would set Israel free with a liberty greater than Rome could give or take away. He would make every Jew a king who would rule his own life according to a righteous law written in his own heart. Hence he called these men to follow him and to be his disciples. He would train them to give like princes and heroes the larger gifts of life and service, the gifts of truth and freedom to their race.

A large equipment was needed for this work. Even Jesus could not make great givers out of small receivers. He could not fill the world with God's life by pouring it from vessels that contained little of it. Hence the need of discipleship, of miracle, of prayer, of the transfiguration, of the upper room, of Calvary and the resurrection, and, crowning all, of a perennial Pentecost by which he kept their souls replete with his own Spirit, even the Spirit of God.

The splendid fame of the twelve apostles was an immortality of immeasurable cost which they never achieved for themselves ; but we should not underestimate the heroism they manifested in leaving all to follow Jesus. They had their reward, however, not in a far-sounding fame, but rather in the sublime consciousness that their lives were inseparably associated with the perfect life of Jesus, which is turning history into music, and making civilization synonymous with the Kingdom of Heaven.

THE FIRST SERMON

He came to Nazareth where he had been brought up.—LUKE iv. 16.

This incident is not the only one of its class. Many a bright young man has attained to honourable distinction abroad and has been received with a proud proprietary cordiality on his return. But no community will suffer any of its youthful sons to reprove it for heedlessness or irreligion. The people will, in every such case, hurl the offender from his honourable eminence into the valley of debasement, unless he be wise and great enough, as Jesus was, to make his appeal to the higher court of history.

Jesus realized that the prophecy of a Messiah who should bring release and healing to the bound and broken heart of Israel was to be fulfilled in his own person. How urgently in every age the world needs the spirit that sees humanity's needs and supplies them ; that releases the prisoner, feeds the hungry, heals the sick, gives eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, hope to the despondent, and joy to the sorrow-stricken heart !

Jesus never measures his own powers to ascertain their limitations. He never dreamed that there was not enough of him to meet the contingencies of any work that claimed the activities of his soul. He had recourse to all the fountains of eternal life and being. No bars or bonds could effectually restrain the mighty energies of his dauntless heart.

How speedily the nations would be divinely

civilized if every serious soul would recognize the eternal voice and obey the call of Heaven as promptly as did Jesus. Many see the need of an Abram to pioneer, a Moses to lead, an Isaiah to warn, but how few dream that they can accomplish God's will and are the very souls that He is so eagerly calling to obedience and to divine achievement.

The Scriptures most needing to be realized by myriads of Christian souls to-day is this text of Jesus' first sermon, "The Lord hath anointed me. . . . He hath sent me." Each must be conscious of his anointing to God's work ; each must accept the divine call to some Christian apostolate. If God anointed Cyrus the heathen king of Persia to be a messiah to the oppressed of Israel, and He did ; if He sent a maid-servant to be an apostle to the family of a Syrian noble, and He did ; then surely He has anointed us to do some work urgently needing to be done in His Kingdom in the earth. The white, waving harvests everywhere call to the reapers, but millions are deaf to their silent appeal. Myriads of human souls are desolate because we fail to say in word or winsome smile, "Well done, true and faithful heart. Let me be your friend."

Jesus saw many shortcomings in Israel, but as yet he hoped the nation would be saved. He knew that God was no respecter of persons but those only who do righteously are accepted of him. He realized that salvation to Israel could come only by repentance and reformation. Faithful to his neighbours, he called upon them to repent and to enter the Kingdom of Heaven which was now in their midst.

He reminded them that Israel was God's peculiar people only as they were peculiarly obedient to the eternal call ; that as God was impartial, He had kept the Hebrew prophet during famine days in the saintly home of a Sidonian widow, and had cleansed a Syrian leper who obeyed His prophet while many a Jewish leper remained unclean. Long before Jesus, Amos had reminded Israel that God is not partial, " Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, O Children of Israel ? saith the Lord. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt ? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir ? " (Amos ix. 7).

Israel had been reminded many a time that character is the foundation of all achievement, and now Jesus came with the voice of comfort and with the authority of Heaven and gave promise of peace to Israel in righteousness, but only in righteousness.

" This day is this Scripture fulfilled."

May every Christian hear the voice of eternal Love calling to his heart as did Isaiah in the days of old, and as Jesus did. May every Christian say with conviction, " The Lord hath anointed me to build into my own nation the life of righteousness and peace, to tell to my own community the gospel of social justice and consequent goodwill."

PASSOVER AND EARLY GALILEAN MINISTRY

BIRTH FROM ABOVE

Ye must be born again.—JOHN iii. 7.

MAN has many births. He is born many times in his own person, and every other human birth is his, for the net racial achievement is his heritage. He is born physically long before he is a physical individual, and after he has acquired physical individuality there comes his mental birth, which we know as the oncoming of self-consciousness. Still later is the birth from above, the entrance into God-consciousness or a conscious relation with the divine Spirit.

The psychology of the new birth is very obscure. Statements about this experience are so often indefinite and inaccurate, that while we may know the experience itself we cannot give any formal description of it. One chief feature which characterizes every birth from above is the consciousness of a world of spiritual environment. It is an unseen world, albeit it is a world of wonderful illumination. "Light" is the best term with which

to describe the new consciousness itself from a psychological viewpoint. It is a newly acquired realization of the music that surges beyond the limits of tone. It is a new appreciation of the beauty that lies unseen "beyond the violet rays," outside the rainbow tints, but yet within the fields of life.

A second feature of the birth from above is the flood of joy which so often irradiates the soul when the new life enters. This may not be felt immediately, but sooner or later there will be some accession of feeling and joyous satisfaction as the result of the soul's newly-found environment.

A third feature, which is an essential part of the new birth, is the great moral uplift which ensues. So great is the impression received that some profound ethical change is sure to occur. So Jesus said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." The character of this moral change will be determined by the tendencies of the individual conscience, which is largely the product of education and heredity.

It will be seen that these three features of change have their seat respectively in the mental, emotional and moral natures. The head has more light, the heart more feeling, and the hand new impulses to righteous endeavour.

Can the new birth be hastened by the individual? It certainly can. There may be obstacles. Some delay may be occasioned by the crude state of development of the individual, and this may be his misfortune rather than his fault. The experience will be greatly hastened, however, by earnest conversation with persons who have entered into

the spiritual environment, especially if such conversation is a discussion or a study of the life of Jesus.

The distinction between regeneration and conversion, though so vital, is often lost sight of in indefinite thought and inaccurate statement. "The wind bloweth where it listeth and we cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth," but we can sail into the open sea where the spiritual breezes prevail and then fly with the winds of God whither they may take us. Every child needs regeneration as it develops, but to convert a child is to whitewash the blue sky.

This is the primary lesson in the school of Christ, who was the life, the truth and the way. This is the first step in the path of spiritual attainment, which, having entered, there is no end, but eternal progress.

The soul may come by various influences and through devious ways to the gateway of eternal life—by sorrow, by meditation, by study, by discipline, by instruction ; but before it can enter that portal there must be renunciation of all that the new life forbids as being contrary to its existence and development. There must also be the acceptance of all that it enjoins as necessary to that life.

Nothing can impart the life from above but the life-giving Spirit of the Eternal, the Spirit that filled Jesus with all the fulness of God.

In the soul that is born again there may be ignorance and prejudice, crude theories and misdirected aims, wild fancies or narrow views, but there cannot

be wilful ignorance, cruelty or indolence, for these stand forever as a bar to the new life and its forces of light and love and helpfulness.

Every new life is a development from the life that precedes it, but that development is made by the power of the life from above which is given abundantly to every vital form. The divine pours its powers into us and we are lifted up into the wide world of the true and are forever free.

Humanity is a bud trying to blossom.

LIVING WATER

The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.—JOHN iv. 14.

The noblest of all arts is that of awakening a soul. To find a soul asleep, blind, or spiritually unborn ; to stir within it aspirations to love and strength and purity ; to find a heart cast down, defeated, hopeless, and to open to it the splendours of a larger life and stir within it the hope of joy and victory, is the highest and divinest art known to man. In this story of Jesus at the well we have the record of one case in which Jesus practised this art. It is worthy of our closest study.

The woman of Sychar was a sinner, and Jesus knew it. He did not avoid her on that account or fail to be interested in her welfare. He worked cautiously and carefully, yet assiduously, to open the door of her heart to the truth and light. He

probably suspected the presence of great possibilities in her when the fruit of the spirit should mature in her regenerate life. If so, he was not mistaken, for that very day she was the means of awakening a city.

Jesus' method was wise and safe. He asked her for a favour, a small one, quite easily within her power. This made her his benefactor, put him under obligation to her, and therefore set her at perfect ease with him.

The first action in any engagement is generally the most significant. It requires the utmost tact and diplomacy, for its results give to one or the other contending force the strategic position throughout the whole engagement.

There is a permanent psychological law involved in Jesus' method. It may be stated thus: The soul that is elate is off guard. Jesus gave the woman reason to be elated when he, a Jew, asked a favour from her, a woman and a Samaritan.

She was elated, and in her elation she was so much at her ease that she was ready in her surprise at so unusual a request to ask for an explanation. She was even ready to discuss the differences which divided their once united nation. Thus far, Jesus had not revealed his power, and the woman, at first positive, soon became negative in the presence of his quiet but dignified bearing. She had no suspicion of his immeasurable reserve force. He now opened to her the resources of his nature and appealed to her with such positiveness, directness and insight that she was taken off her guard, was surprised and ready to capitulate.

Jesus saw that this woman had strength and influence, and he wished to use her for missionary work, so he said :

“ Go call thy husband.”

It was a request and also a command. It acted as a probe, and her response, given perchance in a faltering and hesitant tone, and with a certain indirectness of eye, was such a revelation of her heart that he immediately issued that fearful challenge freighted with condemnation, yet spoken with such kindly reproachfulness that she was not repelled, but mightily attracted to this strangely interesting person who had so summarily entered into the stronghold of her soul, and was so intelligently discussing with her, from within the citadel of her life, the weak places in its walls of defence.

The same method by which Jesus proceeded in this case will avail in every human relation. Why are the poor in spirit and the meek so powerful as to be, according to Jesus' word, kings of heaven and inheritors of earth? Is it not because their modesty and meekness elates others with a sense of personal superiority which does not actually exist, thus putting them off guard while all the resources of a quiet strength and nobility come into play against such vanity, and carry the point with a force far stronger than was at first suspected.

Thus Sychar felt the touch of Christ. Jesus leavened that Samaritan city with the life of truth through the influence of one citizen, and that citizen a woman and a sinner. It is an illustration of how much one inspired soul can do. None need despair of being useful and effective. Self-depreciation is

usually born of cowardice, and is the great danger of those who esteem themselves as modest and meek, but in reality are mere nobodies, because they are sure they cannot do the thing presently needing to be done.

Jesus showed the woman of Sychar that in her own heart was a fountain of living water whose presence there she had never suspected.

The fountain may throw its sparkling waters high into the sunshine, but there must be a reservoir in the hills whence comes the perennial supply. The heart is the living channel through which the life immortal flows, but the life itself is from God and is forever becoming ours as long as we will to use it for His purposes. Under these conditions, inspiration is universal.

Facts, circumstances, objects, expressions, sermons, books, prayers, etc., may be exciting causes, but the power, the sweetness, and the life come always from within where God has His temple and His throne. The seat of final authority is God's voice in the soul.

Herein lies the source of all unity. Every man must at last recognize his brother's right to accept as final the mandate of his own soul.

LORD OF THE SABBATH

The Sabbath was made for man. . . . The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.—LUKE vi. 1-5.

Jesus everywhere maintains the supremacy of man over institutions. In every age and nation, while

the prophet has championed the rights of man, the priest has maintained the authority of established orders. Thus the people often become the slaves of human enactments and methods, finding in tangible symbols what they esteem as the final purport of the religious life. They lay unlimited stress upon the non-essential symbol, not having clear views as to the real essence of religion.

The Son of Man—every son of Man who intelligently keeps the law of God—is also Lord of the Sabbath and of every other institution, for they are all made for him. True, the Sabbath is to be kept holy unto the Lord, but do you suppose that divine interests can be kept separate from human interests? The human is divine and the divine is human. If the divine were not human it would be less than divine, and if the human were not divine it would be less than human. Human interests are, therefore, divine interests, and divine interests are human interests. Institutions have great value and significance, but one humble human soul is infinitely greater than all institutions and establishments, human and divine. The moment we regard as more important than our own highest interests the Sabbath, the Bible, the sacraments, or any other of the institutions by which men regulate their lives and conduct, we belittle our own souls, we dishonour God our Maker, we deny the Christ and miss our highest good, which is to recognize our oneness with the Father eternal and immortal, and to identify our life-work with His purposes.

What, then, is the law of the Sabbath? It is that we observe it wholly in the interests of man,

but especially in his interests as they affect his higher nature. To keep the Sabbath selfishly, even according to the letter of the law, is the worst form of Sabbath desecration.

The highest interests of man are those of his spirit, which is the breath of God in him. They, therefore, rightly receive special consideration on a day set apart for that purpose.

Nevertheless, we must not deify symbols because they are venerable, or sacrifice to them the rights of man. We may venerate and honour with a proper regard the almost sacred establishments that have defied the ages and outlived the changing centuries, but we must not pay homage to them. We must not forget that man is supreme above them all.

All the thoughts of men, all usages of society, all human interpretations of the Law of God, are subject to careful revision from time to time, both by the individual and by society as a whole.

The distress of a human body, the hunger of a human heart, is more worthy of our attention than any ceremony or venerable symbol. A man's relation to the supply of his needs is the highest consideration that can engage the thought of man, and the noblest and loftiest achievements of human endeavour will be attained by bringing into happy and harmonious relation the needs of man in all his nature and God's ample provision for their satisfaction.

THE SERMON ON LIFE AND DUTY

(SECOND YEAR)

BEATITUDES

Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the meek.
Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the per-
secuted.—MATT. v. 3-12.

THE letter of Jesus' teaching is a central point from which all truth radiates to an ever-widening circumference, and grows richer and fuller as the field of known truth enlarges.

Jesus' own experience is the highest warrant for the truth contained in these beatitudes. If he was not happy, his teaching fails. He endured the cross and thought little of its shame, because of the joy that was set before him. This shows, as far as a text can, that he was happy—but let us see. Men deem the powerful happy. Jesus, more than any other man of all times and nations, had the mastery of life and nature. That so many apocryphal absurdities are ascribed to him in the way of wonderful works from the days of his infancy till his death, only shows that there was a nucleus of genuine miracle, the tap-root from which all these stories grew. Does wealth make men happy? His tastes

were simple and his heart serene, and these constitute the greatest wealth. Fame? His fame is as wide as the world, and his name is the best known in the annals of the race. Is love, of all things, most necessary to a happy life? Jesus gave love a new name, for the old names were not large enough to describe the love wherewith countless millions have loved him even unto death.

Above all the sources of happiness which men regard, Jesus depended upon those deeper and surer fountains of permanent joy which all his followers know so well. He had the assurance that by his life of love and sacrifice the myriads of earth were to be uplifted nearer to God, were to be brought into a conscious relation to him as a loving Father and a constant Friend. He cleared the spiritual vision of the race, opened new vistas of joy, wider avenues of life, and displayed stronger and more definite qualities of character in greater helpfulness and sweeter comradeship. He made the world a possible home for the beautiful and the true, and brought men distinctly nearer to the likeness of God. Jesus was the happiest man that ever lived. The highest, heavenliest joys never come to a man till his heart has been ploughed by deep furrows of sorrow and affliction.

Jesus always identified himself with the unfortunate. Misfortune drives the soul back to the central fastness of its own being, and there it finds God.

Am I unfortunate because I toil in a humble lot, eat plain food and wear my clothes threadbare? Not at all. The Most High works with me and

within me, for no minutest cell of all my physical frame is Godless. Every fibre vibrates to the touch of God's finger and brings to pass its own part in the anthem of the skies. I am not unfortunate. I am happy to be permitted to work.

All the purposes of life are served, all the will of Heaven is done as long as I obey God. If my obedience breaks down obstructing barriers, overcomes all obstacles, keeps serene in the midst of opposition, sweet in spite of bitter experiences, surely, then, my faithfulness is well-pleasing to God.

These happy people of whom Jesus speaks are not weak spirits. They are the strongest and most manly and womanly. They know a lie, a fraud, a sham, but they also know a penitent, and can say to him, "Thy sins are forgiven, go in peace." What they bind on earth is bound in heaven, and what they loose on earth is loosed in heaven. They can neither be bought nor sold nor conquered. They are omnipotent in that their will is the will of God.

THE VISION OF GOD

The pure in heart : . . . shall see God.—MATT. v. 8.

Of all religious faculties, spiritual vision is easily the chief. No function is higher, no privilege more precious, no power more wonderful. The vision of God is the chief essential of religion, and without such vision there can be no true worship. Vision is, indeed, the only measure of the pathos of blindness.

There can be no vision of the divine without purity of heart, so that, in its turn, a pure heart is a necessary condition of any real religion. Sincerity, simplicity, directness of aim and purity of affectional nature are a *sine qua non* of right relation to life and destiny.

The vision of God is so thrilling an experience, so vital to genuine happiness, so pivotal in its relation to the spiritual nature, that we should study most carefully how to attain it. The soul, famished by dry-as-dust speculations and a whole desert of theories, comes to the realization of a kind and benevolent power which invites love and communion, as to an oasis in a wide Sahara of vain imaginings. But it is when the soul has for many years lived in closest fellowship with that unseen Friend that the greatest transformation takes place in life and character, for then the soul takes on the likeness of God. It becomes religious, and religion is a passion for the will of God.

The question comes to every growing soul in its early experience, Is there a God, or does nature change its seasonal form fortuitously? Orderly thought and a right spirit will always bring to the soul the vision of a force which at every opportunity bursts through the barriers of dead forms into new and ever-renewed expressions of life. All the field of nature presents a picture of life rushing to meet life, force urging movement to combine with other friendly forces, form combining with form to bring out new and beautiful compositions, tone blending with tone to make sweeter music, and chemical forces producing new substances for the use of all.

If art is soul expression, then God is the supreme Artist.

Thus nature is ever converting melodies into harmonies, actions into epics, individuals into families, artistic units into masterful compositions, but nowhere is the constructive and reconstructive process so beautifully seen as where the soul of man comes into new relations with the soul of all, and is conscious of the vision of God. Vaguely at first the heart becomes aware that it has its being in the centre of life, that it is not alone, that it cannot be orphaned. The heart-eyes open and the soul's progress in well-being is assured. This may leave a thousand theories unchanged, and these may at times greatly perplex the soul, but one thing is sure, the vision is a gloriously helpful one, and comes solely and surely to the pure in heart.

How shall impurity be excluded from the heart? The impure will grow as surely as weeds come up among the flowers, unless we nurture the pure and true in our spirits. Unless we are careful to banish the impure thought, the base deed will surely appear. The mind must be filled with things pure and lovely and of good report, that no vacant room may be found for any abomination whatsoever. We shall learn later that that which cometh out of a man defileth him, therefore it is necessary to cultivate pure conceptions in the mind, so that the man be not defiled by anything that may issue from it.

OUR FATHER

Our Father, who art in heaven.—MATT. vi. 9.

But is God our Father, or is this only an accommodation of the word to a poetic usage?

Is it true that God has begotten us? Are we all in a very real sense conceived by the Holy Spirit? Or are we orphans and is God childless in this world? Let us see.

What gives us power to be, to act, to achieve, to sympathize, to love? Is it not that great eternal power whose human name is Love, and Father, and God?

Surely we are His sons, who are the latest and thus far the highest expression of His life, the best product of His mind and heart. We who feel the moods and tenses of His universe in our spirits, whose hearts respond when they hear the music of His birds and trees and stars, who can look up with love-lit eyes when His summer breezes caress our cheeks, and smile when His thundering battalions sweep along the sky—surely we are His children.

But He is our Father in heaven.

He is also on the earth. His life pervades the whole universe. His power in molecule and cell and in the vast cosmos everywhere is seen, but it is in the heaven within, where we who are of His spirit, of His home, of His heart, made in His likeness, see Him most intimately and enjoy with Him the highest communion. We rise in spirit above all the music of the world, we leave behind the roar of seas and storms and cataracts; we rise higher even

than the music of the birds and hear within our own hearts a loftier, sweeter, heavenlier music than any audible harmony that earth knows. Our King, our Father, our Lover, whispers His tender tones of affection to our hearts.

Ah, yes, our God is a father whom we cannot but love. He hides us in His heart. He locks us with Himself in the secret place, the inner room. We are His sons and daughters, His loving children.

A large, sweet and beautiful conception of God as the Father of our spirits, if it be well homed in our minds and hearts, will do more for us than any other truth, than any other love.

The finest of all life's treasures is a right thought concerning God.

THE SACRED NAME

Hallowed be thy name.—MATT. vi. 9.

A name is a symbol intended to call up a mental picture of the thing named. If it does this faithfully it is a suitable symbol and an effective name. Millions of money have been paid for names, but nowhere are they more important than in the spiritual realm. Here, however, more latitude is taken. A thousand different conceptions may be named "God."

Jesus conceived of God as a living, loving Father, ever careful and solicitous as to the welfare of His children. Such a picture of God as Jesus gives in the story of the Prodigal's father, and of the good

shepherd who lost a sheep, is beautiful, simple and comforting to the lonely and erring heart of humanity, and we should cherish this thought of Jesus concerning God and teach it on every occasion, for in these stories are embodied the foundation truths of the beautiful Gospel of Peace.

When we pray, "Hallowed be thy name," we should have in mind, as fully as we can, all that the name of God means to us of His greatness, His holiness and His unspeakable love. All the majesty of His character and the perfection of His being will, unconsciously to us, modify our thought of Him. His are all the multifarious expressions of life in the beauties and the bounties of nature. The myriad activities of day with its sunlit majesty and splendour are His: His also is the deep pervasive hush of the perfect night. All the mysterious steps of science, the perfections of art, the conclusions of firm philosophy, are expressions of those mighty laws of which His life and being are the eternal source.

We never have the most satisfying conception of God, however, till we experience in our souls a measure of the love and strength and purity with which our divine protagonist touches the chaos of matter and commands order, touches the chaos of mind and brings forth spiritual harmony; till He casts out all evil and debasing forces from our lives and establishes in their place a permanent order and a heavenly progress. Then we feel like exclaiming, "How great and beautiful is God, how strong and infinite, how pure and true, how gentle and tender, how intensely and eternally loving and

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constant." Not till we look to Jesus and find in him all of eternal beauty and infinite glory that could be expressed in a human form do we find anywhere a perfect human picture of our God.

In these days the name does not mean enough to us. It is the character that hallows the name. How often we have regarded a name as commonplace till some human embodiment of subtle strength and grace comes into our lives and glorifies that humble name, making it holy by giving it an atmosphere of love and reverence and beauty. Similarly we shall hallow God's name when we learn what He is, and how far beyond the power of earth's language to describe. When we know God as that love that warms our hearts and sweetens life with its mighty yearnings and its urgent and eager affinities, as the light that enlightens us with its truth and makes us strong and free, then we shall revere God's name, for it will mean to us perfection of beauty, sublimity of character and inexhaustible wisdom and love.

As the name means character, we should reverence everything that in any way expresses that character, whether it be the Scriptures, where the life of holiness is set forth, or those larger scriptures of our own times, which so wonderfully display His wisdom and His excellent greatness. We must reverence the firmament, whose multitudinous star-systems tell us of His power ; the all-embracing sea, which speaks to us of eternity ; the multifarious expressions of God's nature in field and forest—all must have our reverent attention.

But chiefly man, made in the likeness of the

Eternal, should receive our reverence, for though he is still without perfect wisdom, he is yet the greatest of God's creatures, because he can most fully express God's character. We must reverence man and so hallow the eternal name.

As Goethe has so beautifully shown, while it is right to reverence what is higher than we, it is also well to reverence what is around us, but to these ethnic and philosophic reverences we must add the still higher reverence of that which is beneath us, for this is the Christian reverence, born of profoundest illumination.

Let us hallow God's name in all the realms of life and being, for in everything God's life is finding some expression, the eternal Logos for ever speaks, and everywhere God's character is revealed.

THE KINGDOM

Thy kingdom come.—MATT. vi. 10.

The Kingdom of Heaven is the only one in which every citizen is obedient in heart. Other kingdoms enforce obedience from without; here the compulsion is from within. Thus the Kingdom of God is the only true democracy, for every subject is a veritable king and rules his life by the power of affections that reign in his own heart.

In other kingdoms each citizen demands rights for himself; in the Kingdom of God each seeks the welfare of the others, so that here is the home of a universal altruism.

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Jesus is the ideal citizen in the Kingdom of God. His love and purity, his gentleness and goodness, when appropriated by a life of obedience, transform the soul till it is a citizen of heaven.

Such souls keep the noble and selfless life in view till the spirit of love is thoroughly at home in the heart.

The method of the life of love—the life of heaven, the life of this kingdom of God—is the way of sacrifice, the way of the cross.

Self-sacrifice is easy when love prompts it. Love makes the life of sacrifice the gladdest of all lives. Jesus is the most joyful character in all the sweep of earth's long history. His love was the greatest, his joy was the greatest, therefore he was the greatest.

Sorrows the most crushing are often accompanied by the heavenliest raptures ; out of the agonies of lacerated hearts develop the perfect fruits of everlasting joy.

The ideal of the kingdom, its vision, the fair light of the city of God that gladdens the hearts of all its citizens, is the light of love. It is that ideal that compels their glad hearts to works of sympathy and helpfulness, of comradeship and sacrifice. It is that power that prompts them to seek and save the lost, to bring them into their home in the kingdom, to be comrades to the companionless, to waken the sleepers, to raise the dead from the tomb of selfishness, to turn mere money-makers into hearts, to transform the looters in the camps of life into loyal soldiers and lovers of the King.

There is no other worthy ideal.

There is no other way but the method of sacrifice.
Nothing but Love.

Nothing can satisfy the human heart ; nothing can satisfy the heart of God ; nothing can solve the problems of the ages ; nothing can abolish corruption from politics ; nothing can remove the restlessness of labour and capital ; nothing can destroy the greed of wealth and abolish the injustice of the money lords and the arrogance of their power—nothing but love, nothing but sacrifice. There is no other way.

“ Thy kingdom come.”

THE WILL OF THE KING

Thy will be done in earth.—MATT. vi. 10.

The will of God is more comprehensive and more beautiful than our human imaginations have ever conceived.

God ignores the darkness and the storm. His will is superior to every obstacle. The Eternal Desire, an everlasting bombardment of difficult conditions and obstacles apparently insurmountable, keeps on in its never-ceasing work, unconscious of the difficulties, seeing only the significance of the outcome.

The Eternal Will never builds on shallow foundations, but works patiently till it strikes the rock-bed of a deep and permanent faith and character, and on these it builds temples of love and palaces of life, strong, fair and eternal.

The Eternal Will is not merely God's pleasure, a passing whim, the impulse of a moment. It is a grand and substantial purpose, whose foundations are love and wisdom, whose beginnings are from eternity. It makes steadily, unfailingly and unceasingly for the noblest life, the life that is real.

Such is the will of God.

We may know the workings of God's will in our own lives if we be patient and wise. The clouds may be dark for a time. Let us work and wait. Some day the light will creep over the silver edges of the cloud-masses and the sun burst forth and pour its pervasive light into our spirits till we shall wonder why we were blind so long. There may be deep sorrow in our souls because we feel that our loved ones do not see or feel as we do. Let us try to feel that all shall soon be right, and God will bring His Eternal Will to pass, and we shall find that our desire has become identical with that of the Infinite heart. Some day our friends, whom we despaired of for a time, shall come home to our yearning hearts and the unseen fountains will pour us out such gladness and strength and hope as shall fill us with unspeakable peace.

Heaven shall be committed to all those who are in harmony with the will of God. All power is given unto them who do His pleasure. When we add our desire and prayer to the Eternal Will, it cannot be denied. We are in the ways of eternity, and nothing can resist our prayers. God does not sleep, but every note of human desire that is in tune with the purpose of God is added by a beautiful blending of harmonic vibration to the music of the

Infinite. To him who stands erect even the stars bow down.

God's will, when it is done on earth, will mean the establishment of relations of love. It means that earth's wars shall henceforth be battles of peace, where the combatants are all lovers and friends, the rivals all victors, and every common soldier a king crowned with nobility and praise. History is a divine programme.

Lord, give us the obedient heart, so that Thou canst work Thy will effectually in our life and being, till we stand complete in the beautiful and solemn light of the life eternal, which is to know Thee and believe him whom Thou hast sent.

“Thy will be done.”

OUR DAILY BREAD

Give us this day our daily bread.—MATT. vi. 11.

What a miracle is the world's annual bread yield ! What stores of food the Earth-Mother provides for her family every year, pouring it joyfully out of her own heart !

Do you imagine this is only a figure of rhetoric ? Then I tell you plainly that there is in the earth, and indeed in all nature, an eternal heart that is delighted to give bread to the human race. Why should we always call God our Father ? He is equally our mother, and so, in this connection we do not hesitate to name God our Earth-Mother.

The earth would yield no bread were it not that

God breathes into it the breath of life. Constantly the organic forces must penetrate the soil, or the field would yield no fruit. So that in the most literal sense God must give us our daily bread, or we should have none.

Man cannot live by bread alone, but needs every word that proceeds from the mouth of God—the divine word in the whispering breeze and the murmuring sea, the sweet word of a lover's voice, low, tender and caressing, and that eternal love in which human love has its divine source. The Love of God is the sublimest example of the bread of life. All these words of God are necessary to the life of Man.

But man must earn his daily bread. Wage slavery must go, but still man shall earn his bread in patient work and active service of man. This is well, for always man finds God in the path of duty and among the things in which he labours. In terms of the lately discovered words of Jesus: "Lift the stone and thou shalt find me; cleave the wood and there am I." Ever in honest, faithful work shall men find the Lord and hear his word. Especially is this true when work is done in the spirit of love.

Thus our daily bread must include our daily work, which is one of the supreme needs of life.

Comradeship is another of the forms in which God gives us bread. The inspiration of other hearts is quite necessary to the well-fed soul. Communion with the lofty spirits of the "mighty dead—the undying, the never to die," brings God's word to the soul, and this we find especially in studying the

Bible, where the revelation of God is historically set forth in words that live, not in the book, but in the greater living book of the human soul.

“Lord, give us this bread. Give us this water of life, so that we thirst not again.”

AS WE HAVE FORGIVEN

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.—MATT. vi. 12.

God does not take counsel as to whether He will forgive. He does not have to. As soon as we are forgiveable we are forgiven. God does not have “to go to do it.” We are forgiven as soon as we have forgiven. Love includes forgiveness.

“When ye fast be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance.” Love delights in its own sacrifices, because of the loved one; it never parades its sacrifices, albeit it delights in them. Self-love is showy, displays its love and is jealous of the love that illumines other hearts. True love always delights in having its object supremely loved by others. It is glad when others are apotheosized by Love’s illuminating power. Only self-love is small or selfish in any way. Love is large and generous and god-like; it is God. If one really wishes to look sad when suffering for love’s sake, such love is a false one; it is self-love and the sufferer is a hypocrite. Appearances, not love, are his reward. Such a one is no true lover.

“Lay up treasure in Heaven.” This is not a command to hoard our life’s hope and joy in some

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far-off treasure-island, where God is to act as our banker or steward. Here is the whole fact till God takes us hence.

“The kingdom is among you.” Self-love hoards its treasures. It calls them “goods.” Lay up treasures in human hearts, where the Kingdom is, as Jesus said. No other treasure will avail, and there is no other safe treasure-house ; no other will abide. Lay up treasures of sympathy, of kindness, and fruit of noble deeds.

Forget your worldly goods, your treasures of self-love, your fine dress, your bank-book, your bonds, your estate : remember God ; remember Love. When you pass a brother in the street, remember that a smile, a kind word, a pleasant salutation will be a heavenly treasure ; you have met God. Take off your shoes wherever there are human hearts, for the place is holy and nature is on fire there.

Man is God’s highest revelation. God gains eternally by expression in the human. Nature, and man, who is nature’s crown, are abounding—bursting their bonds—with the expansive power of the divine energy within. What a joy to give expression to that love, light and energy which are the character of God.

DELIVER US FROM EVIL

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from
evil.—MATT. vi. 13.

Attempts have been made to justify a variation in this text. The Greek verb in the first clause has

been variously translated "leave," "abandon," etc., and the conjunction uniting the two clauses has been translated "unless" instead of "but." Thus the variant readings would be, "Leave us not in temptation," etc.; "Abandon us not to temptation," etc., and "Lead us not into temptation unless thou deliver us from the evil."

A careful and conscientious examination of the Greek text seems hardly to warrant such a construction in any of these cases, and all variants in the original are also of doubtful authority. We are, therefore, compelled to accept the record as it is and give to the reporters of the prayer such confidence as we may.

As generally interpreted, this is a thoroughly illogical prayer. A wise and loving God will not lead us into anything except for our good. But this is a prayer of the heart rather than of the head. The heart will have—must have—its prayer, and that prayer will not always be logical.

Love is not always calculating. The loved one is poor—no matter, love is rich. Is sick—love will be a physician, nurse and medicine. Is beset with difficulties—love will overcome them. Love is masterful, adequate, victorious.

Why should we pray, "Lead us not into temptation"? The heart that has known the struggle, the anguish, the martyrdom of the battle, is led to cry out in the agony of its remembrance, "Lead us not into temptation." But, if experience and progress are to win us a larger life, why should we try to escape the trial? I know not whether toil and temptation are to be involved in the eternal

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destiny of the soul, but we may be sure that every difficulty and temptation will develop its compensating power to endure and to achieve. If the right were always easy character would be cheap.

“Deliver us from evil.” We are very liable to find evils where none exist. The simple, austere and strenuous life is often regarded as an evil, but the student of human life and history knows that they who accept such conditions in a right spirit are strengthened by them and are able to turn them to advantage.

In any case we have confidence that if we are in harmonious relation with the will of God, we are surely moving onward to a more harmonious life. Every prayer, however, must be subject to that masterpiece of all prayers, “Thy will be done.”

THE KINGDOM POWER AND GLORY THINE

Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory.

MATT. vi. 13.

God's kingdom is a comprehensive one. He rules over all. In nature numberless hosts obey Him. The grass-blades at His word burst into the light of heaven from their prison enfoldment. Everywhere fledgelings are sounding “tweet! tweet!” as they escape from their newly-broken shell, myriad buds are blossoming, crystals are forming their spars of beauty in the caverns and still places of the dark, some day to startle humanity with their splendour. God speaks in gravitation, and everywhere waters

rush down the sluices of the world to their divine destination, or with quiet motion glide on through shade or sunshine, brightly or darkly, to that "far-off divine event" to which God, the King, calls them. The mountains stand eternally rebuking impatience and impulsiveness, an everlasting tribute to the strength and constancy of our God. How wonderful is our King. Is not God sublime?

See! The lightning strikes its sword of flame through the dark night, darting like a whip of fire that cracks in thunder. Was ever anything grander? And what a truth is in it. It means that all the worlds and their robes of vapour are full of energy and fire, and even the darkness is spilling over with light.

And what power and beauty God displays!

See how He drives His chariot of the sun along the highways of the sky? He drives on for ever. We look till we see the glowing cavalcade glide down the radiant west. The stars come out, revealing the sacred night, till all the poetry of the gloaming is singing in our hearts, till the mystery of the twilight steals like a benediction into our souls and calls out all the resources of our imagination to fill with new creations of wonder and beauty the wide and silent spaces of the night.

The great forces of God are ever unseen and unknown. Behind the visible hides the invisible, within the audible is the silent eternal. The incomprehensible eludes us and vanishes beyond the comprehensible; and increasing knowledge reveals vaster fields of truth of which we are ignorant. Within the world of forms dwells the formative soul, universal but formless. This solid looking world of

rocks and trees and stars is the living garment of God who may some day fold it as a vesture. But even though

The cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself
And all that it inherit shall dissolve
And like the baseless fabric of a vision
Leave not a wreck behind,

no vicissitude of nature, no passing of material forms can change His changeless heart, or turn His great power aside from its eternal purpose, or tempt Him to abandon the human heart where His sanctuary and throne and kingdom are established in love, from everlasting to everlasting.

God is beautiful and strong and kingly.

THE SINGLE EYE

The light of the body is the eye.—MATT. vi. 22.

Light is the medium of revelation and expression, and love gives it its colour and intensity. Light implies vision; love presupposes service. Love dies unless the heart seeks opportunities of service. It is more blessed to give than to receive, because to give means to love. To receive always without giving proves the absence of love. Without service, love dies out of the heart, light fades from the soul, the energies of the unseen are no longer perceived, and the soul is dead. Thus these three divine essences remain—Love, Light and Energy—and these three constitute spiritual life and being,

whether human or divine. They are a spiritual trinity in God and man.

Vision, next to the obedient heart, is the greatest gift of God. Soul-vision, in its higher degrees, is a rare gift. For a hundred souls that can perceive what is seen by another, not one can discover for itself. Nature was the first revealer of God. The early peoples worshipped nature as God. Later generations called this idolatry, but have come to believe that God lives in nature. Yet, strange as it may seem, things that are seen are to most souls the chief barriers to vision. We become interested in form and colour, forgetting essences and realities. Seeing with the eyes of the body may prevent us from seeing with the eyes of the soul. When we wish to see God we are accustomed to shut our earthly eyes, for the ordinary hangs like a veil before the extraordinary, the material hides the immaterial.

The best place to see from is the mountain-top. The glens and gorges are beautiful, but they are not serviceable as watch-towers. From the mountain-top we can see the whole landscape—the sunset and the sea, the river winding tortuous through its everglades, the meadows and the mountains, the fir-trees and the forest—and all the comprehensive reaches of earth and sky.

There is a lower as well as a higher vision of the soul.

When we argue and seek to controvert, we are in the valley and cannot see far. But when we rise to the lofty heights of the ideal, we no longer argue, we see and know that argument is futile and proof is impertinence. Then intuition dismisses induction,

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physics falls down before metaphysics, and logic takes a holiday.

Under the open sky, its myriad star-points gleaming,
The gibbous moon swings up from the eastern hills,
The pine tree moans as the breeze sweeps through its
Æolian heart.

I listen intent to the music, but find the music within me.
I gaze on the white, silent moon ; its light is within my
soul.

The stars, too, shine out of the vast reaches of my own
consciousness ;

The open heavens are too small to contain me ; I contain
them ;

I crowd them all into the merest corner of my soul,
And sometimes forget they are there.¹

The telescopic eye of the mountain-visioned soul reports original truth till it pours like a deep river-flood into the clear spaces of his lofty heart. This poetic, cosmic, universal vision is the privilege, and will some day be the faculty of every mountain-climbing soul. The deep intensity of God's life within will illuminate all the lower planes of life ; the mountains will become our watch-towers and all the open heavens our home.

Thus our eyes shall be single and our whole beings shall be full of light.

GOD OR MAMMON

God or mammon.—MATT. vi. 24.

All the significant movements of history are the result of the progress of the soul. The general

¹ *The Wing of the Wildbird*, p. 45.

direction of all tendencies is determined by the choices which the soul makes in its crises of judgment.

Every soul is making choice daily between its present course and a better or worse one. Every upward-striving soul has a voice which tells him when he is wrong. Socrates was not an exceptional case. Spite of toils, sorrows, loneliness and all other obstacles, we must cleave our way to our proper destiny. Otherwise we shall rest in the gay courts of mammon—heartless, base and self-loved.

There is a course where few walk. It is steep and lofty. Its terrors and toils are many. But strength and courage never fail the hero who travels in this way, for it is the course of omnipotent Love, and the soul that has chosen God as its King perceives Him in that pathway fair and grand.

But the self-loving soul heaps rubbish around itself, calling it riches or fame or treasure. Alas! that soul has chosen mammon and the dark ways of death. The God-conquered soul chooses divine Love and not self-love as its portion, and its chief joy is to do good to all God's creatures, because of its love for them. It turns all its ambitions into aspirations, yet works on just as if it were immeasurably ambitious.

The crisis tests the soul. The prudent little soul is tremendously cautious, estimates trifling danger to a hair-breadth as it appears through his microscope of fear. He will not take the awful risk. The great soul sees the future, where the crisis is to be met with a firm heroic spirit, and fears not the stress of battle. He is not seeking easy tasks. He will not

take a base course, because it offers the line of least resistance. He does not ask whether his own particular bones are safe in the struggle. He will not turn the toils and tears and sweat of other men into his own personal profit. He will not be the slave of his own possessions. He is the servant of God and he brings all that is his into the same sweet service. The demoniacal possession of to-day is mammonism.

The service of the Kingdom of God is a victory over self. The soldier of self-sacrifice is a greater hero than he who faces the dire front of death in the clash of the sword and the battle.

CONSIDER THE LILIES

The life is more than meat.—MATT. vi. 25.

This, like every other utterance of Jesus, is dividing the world. What a person does with any truth labels him in the sight of God and men. It is possible to be either kingly or beggarly in relation to even the most trifling circumstance; the noble soul deals with the food and clothing question as with all others in a certain lofty way impossible to the less worthy.

Stretching up fair and grand into the sky is a many-terraced mountain, standing like a mighty bastion of granite against the deep-domed blue. You speak of its beauty and sublimity to one person, and he replies: "I feel its grandeur more the oftener I gaze upon it. It is a spectacle in the presence of

which I feel like being silent in reverent awe." You make a similar remark to another, and he replies : " Pshaw, I see it every day. I don't think anything of it now, I'm so used to it." The former is on the right hand of God ; the latter is on the left. One is ever yearning for more of God's beautiful life of love and light and helpfulness ; the other, in all probability, is seeking to make himself " solid " both here and hereafter. One heart clamours for divine love, the other seeks only the lower things. One enfolds its life in the divine heart for ever ; the other wills to be strong and independent in itself alone, not knowing that this is quite impossible.

Self-love demands the love of others, but never merits it, never wins it, never gives its own life without first counting the cost and demanding pledges in return. It is always commercial, cautious, prudent, always faithless, and falls thus into the hell of the unloved. It has never learned the only way to be deeply and truly loved—to give love and life freely, not counting the cost, not demanding anything in return, not even a pledge, for love is itself a pledge. Love is never won but by the expenditure of the life in sacrifice. This truth is at the heart of redemption and of every other beautiful and significant truth.

We are to be care-free like the lilies and the swallows. What avails worry ? It will not make you a foot taller. It will not cure a sore head or heal a sore heart. It will only wear the heart and distress the mind.

Trust in God. Obey God as revealed in Jesus, and you will thus acquire the greatest gift, the gift of

love and light and of a kindly heart—in a word, you will have a Christly character.

JUDGE NOT

Judge not.—MATT. vii. 1.

I reserve judgment. I reserve it for ever. I have not all the evidence before me. I can never know all the facts. Moreover, if I had all the evidence, I should probably not have the ability or the grace to judge rightly. Besides, I do not like the task of pronouncing verdicts, and, as I do not have to, I emphatically abstain. I will condemn no one henceforth. I will blame no one.

He who judges unjustly is himself brought under condemnation. A cardinal sin is this unjust judgment. Jesus says: "Pray ye, 'Forgive us, for we have forgiven,' and 'Condemn not, lest ye be condemned.'"

The really unpardonable sin is that of being unfair and unkind. It is certainly unpardonable while the unkindness continues.

But suppose I have removed the beam from my own eye, surely, then, I may do another the service of pulling the mote out of his. Perhaps; but I would advise against it. Anyway I do not envy you your task. Besides it is none of your duty, unless an appeal be made to you, which is unlikely. Those who do most of this work do it by self-appointment and do it publicly. They do it wholesale and get themselves voted nuisances, bores, grumblers; they come at length to be regarded as jaundice-eyed peccadillo-hunters, who delight in finding flaws in

the characters of their friends and reporting them to the whole world.

Do not get into this habit ; it is the poorest of all miserable employments, and requires no ability whatever. Faults are so common that any fool or ignoramus can find them anywhere with his eyes shut. It is a sign of baseness rather than of strength and sweetness, that you find fault and grumble, or judge and condemn.

Love finds no faults. Love overlooks them, helps to overcome them, but never condemns them except by awakening the soul to life and love, which crowd them out by the all-absorbing impulse of a new and life-giving affection.

Sometimes what we take for a fault is really a strong feature of character. The dust may be gold-dust. Gold is often found in geological faults ; so also golden nuggets may appear in what we have esteemed as faults of character. How can I know who do not know all the springs of life ? How can I know ? I cannot know. I will not blame. I will not judge. I will not play the fool. I will love my brethren and overlook their faults. I will think of my friends at their best. They shall be a word of God to me, and God is Love. I will not judge.

SEEK AND FIND

Seek, and ye shall find.—MATT. vii. 7.

The history of the world is the history of human desires and their fulfilment.

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Natural history is the record of the mighty march of multitudinous nature, ever urging its eager way up to God. Even the rock-crystals manifest, in their orderly arrangement, an obedient expression of the supreme commanding Will.

But only in the human are we able to study the will effectively, and to know how irresistible is its power, and how it sweeps with its imperious might every obstacle before it.

Jesus said mountains could not resist faith, and, indeed, nothing can. The soul that is in line with God's purposes is irresistible. Just as love makes all things glorious, so faith makes all things it desires its own. It may take time to accomplish its purposes, and, if its purposes are wrong, it can never accomplish them, but in the long run, when God's time is come, the purpose of the righteous will and desire shall come to pass, and nothing shall hinder it. Do you believe this? It is better to be greatly confident in God than to be very sure that we ourselves are perfection. It is a sweet satisfaction if we can be sure our wills are parallel with God's eternal purpose. Ever eager for the accomplishment of His will, we shall always live the life eternal, supersensuous, higher than history, and the fountain of a deeper, better history, replete with love and truth and divine comradeship.

There is that in man which, whenever it projects a reverent but firm demand upon the Infinite, is always recognized and receives its appropriate response.

Ever there comes to us unfailingly that which we constantly desire and will, and by the same law, misapplied, that also which we greatly fear.

YE BEING EVIL

How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ?—LUKE xi. 13.

Just as matter is filled with a subtle force which may be separated by a dynamo and applied by a motor to the world's work, so also spiritual force everywhere pervades the physical world and may be appropriated by the discerning soul and applied by faith to the development of character and to the work of life.

The spiritual laws are paramount, and although the laws of matter cannot be suspended, their effects may be overcome by the transcendent power of spirit. Prudence and thrift, directed in harmony with physical and psychological law, will result inevitably in affluence and commercial or industrial success. Just as surely, in the realm of spiritual law, knowledge, faith and obedience will result in the development of personal power and poise and in all spiritual well-being.

Faith is not mere credence. Belief without knowledge or reason is credulity and not faith. Knowledge of spiritual law is necessary to the highest faith, yet few persons have knowledge of the conditions which govern their higher natures. Nevertheless these laws are, in most cases, very simple and quite analogous to their corresponding physical laws. We acquire by the same means on both the physical and the spiritual planes. The conditions are earnest and persistent desire and alertness as to effective resource. There is fervent desire in

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both cases, and persistent effort to give effect to the desire. Importunity is necessary both in the natural and the spiritual realms.

Concentration is needed in both cases. The mind must be fixed upon one object at a time. This is essential to effectual prayer in any realm. The artist's prayer is for the spirit and effective power of art. He will imitate the masters, but if he would be a master himself he will go directly to the soul of nature and there drink in the spirit of essential art. He will absorb all that he sees. The sun dips his round, red rim below the surface of the waters, while upon the land sentinel trees stand in clean-cut definition against the evening sky. The artist will saturate his very being with the spirit of this quiet scene, with the fading glory of the sunset, with the far-away sweep of the darkening waters, with the infinite hush of the evening and the awe that fore-shadows the night. The whole picture to him is sacred, and the hooting owl has for him a voice more hallowed than that of a man who can be frivolous in the midst of a scene so perfect. The artist's soul is sensitive to the least influence of nature; his heart is susceptible to every touch of form and tone and colour.

It is the same with the author. His prayer is the eager desire to express in adequate language the strong, sweet sentiments within him. He welcomes all true concepts. His imagination combines and recombines them into new structural forms of vital significance and permanent beauty. Every incident is to him a thrilling scene in a drama, every possible meaning of which is open to his vision. Alert, he

waits and listens to the voices of nature that he may hear what words of joy and beauty, what sentiments of life and love and destiny may reach his living ear or stir his sensitive soul. So he who wills to be perfect must look to the Master who has revealed the perfect life, and who will teach him that if he would be free within the dominions of his own soul he must keep his ear open to the still small voice of the Spirit till he knows God's voice in his own heart, till he sees that its whisperings of love and faith and life are better and richer to his soul than all Scriptures, however sacred, than all creeds, however correct.

When thus he is in touch with the eternal Power and Love, no harm can come to him, no object can affright him, no obstacle can confound him, no conditions of adversity can distress his soul. He is not concerned as to his own fate. He is conscious of the Infinite Presence, and will not run away from the will of God. Nothing but good can befall the soul that loves the Lord of Truth and Love. He knows that when God wills it the solid mountains shall disappear or melt and run like water. His will is the will of the Eternal God, and therefore he is omnipotent in righteousness.

THE NARROW WAY

Enter ye in at the strait gate.—MATT. vii. 13.

Wide roads are easy because they are smooth and well-worn—because many people travel on them.

To do this requires only a good imitator. To walk in the wide road is to be in the fashion, to conform, to do as others do, to lose your individuality, to have all those features rubbed off which make your particular being worth while. To go in the broad way is to be easy in all those things that should be heroically difficult, and to be stubborn in all those things that do not matter.

All broad roads were once narrow. The hero soul that first kept the Sabbath day in glad obedience to God's solemn call is much akin to him who breaks it for love's sake in harmony with the same call. Every duty grows lighter as it becomes popular and respectable, and many others become effete after they have long been respectable because duties more difficult or more reasonable have taken their place.

Jesus commands entrance into the narrow roads of progress in all ages, those roads where only hero hearts can enter, where divine selflessness is the only power by which we can walk.

The formulas of our fathers have become respectable ; we still observe them. We have our reward in a smug consciousness of safety through a formula.

Children of men. Not that your age excel
In pride of life the ages of your sires,
But that ye think clear, feel deep, bear fruit well,
The Friend of Man desires.¹

The ancient Scriptures contained the Word of God to the ancient world. To us they are also a history of divine revelation to man, and whatever new inspirations may be given or later truths revealed through the book of nature or of life, the

¹ Matthew Arnold.

ancient Word will still be a monument of light and a source of strength to human hearts and minds. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding all this, God is not dead. The Spirit has not ceased to breathe. The Eternal has neither fallen asleep, nor has He forsaken man. God will not leave man to his own devices for one instant, even unto everlasting. He is still the inspirer of human minds and hearts. Love is Love from everlasting to everlasting.

Love is not satisfied with worlds, however majestically they sweep, "trailing clouds of glory" along their circling orbits. Love demands human hearts for a home, and will inspire them with the throbbing music of life as long as time, as long as eternity, endures. Inspiration is not ended.

God spake to Moses, to Isaiah, to Paul, most excellent things which all men should heed; but alas! men have come to believe that He spoke with more meaning to these than He speaks to any modern saint that looks with open heart to Him.

I will follow God's call up ways where Moses never walked, because the world was too young. The music of life has grown sweeter since his day, but the higher chords have still the sacrificial ring, sounding out like the cry of agony from the wounded heart. The same God of truth and love and power, beautiful and strong and kingly, calls us to observe the same principles of life, love, light and work. The music of life ever demands a new score. We must give God's will new and ever more beautiful applications to life's problems, and find our Heaven not in being in harmony with the mind of the crowd, but in serving the crowd by being in harmony with

God and with those few brave and deathless ones who dare to take their orders first-hand from the King, and thus to walk in the narrow way.

“Are there few that be saved?” The answer depends upon definition. He who is condemned to be hanged is saved when he is imprisoned for life. Salvation is relative. If we hold in our minds the real and full meaning of salvation, as doubtless Jesus did, then always, there are few who are saved. There are few who are fulfilling the divinely appointed purposes of their lives, few who are realizing the fruition of all the capacities of their being. Yet this is the only definition of salvation which is in any sense a complete one. It alone involves perfection.

If, on the other hand, we mean any degree of conformity with the mind of God as a fruit of our relation to His Spirit, then there are many who are saved—very many. There are innumerable hosts who are brought consciously into harmony, in some degree, with the Eternal Will by obedience to the Spiritual Law.

The elect are those who freely, by a definite act of their own will, determine to accomplish the will of God. To walk in the narrow way is to compel the obedience of the body—lazy, tired, reluctant; to force the loyalty of the mind—ignorant and indifferent; to stir up the love of a heart constantly tending to grow cold; it means that the soul has heard and responded to that voice that calls it up into the mountain air, up to the throne of being. It means that it for ever refuses to live in the base attitudes and low levels of the uninspired soul. It

will henceforth be like Christ, forgetting its own fate in the joy of serving others. It will willingly bear the reproach of those who regard it as lacking in shrewdness or thrift or strength of mind. It will be joyfully subject to any criticism, because of its adherence to the law of Christ, who never sought his own comfort, yet always longed for love, and whose love and service was his very life.

We should make it the passion of our lives to be like Jesus. This is truly to walk in the narrow way.

THESE SAYINGS OF MINE

Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them.—MATT. vii. 24.

What sayings? Be peaceful, gentle and pure-hearted. Be kind, compassionate and just. Be honest, reliable and true. Be single-hearted, child-like and trustful. Condemn no one. Do as you would be done by. Be earnest and eager to make the life of faith and goodness your constant joy.

Deeds only are decisive. Not he who talks is justified; not he who prays; not he who teaches; but he who does these sayings for love's sake—he who keeps the commandments. Talk does not count; prayers, preachings, professions are of no avail. Only character counts.

“Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

“But we taught in thy name. We cast out demons. We worked miracles.”

It does not count. You did not help with a loving heart where help was needed. Many were

unfortunate, sick, hungry, without a home, lacked the many things you enjoyed. You did not share these as with a brother or a sister. Your heart never melted with love and tenderness towards God's lonely and stricken poor. He who lives in a better house, wears better clothes, fares better in any way than is possible to his neighbours who are just as worthy ; if he disregards them, forgets their need, is indifferent to their sorrow and distress and loneliness ; is losing his life, is out of heaven by that very fact. He is missing his crown by that very indifference. For what is heaven but to love ? And what is life but to do with loving heart the will of God ? And what is hell but to have failed to love ?

The love that spares not itself, its time, money, talents, energy, wealth, anything, everything, but gives them freely both to the worthy and the thankless needy, and gives according to the sovereign law of love, is divine.

We are missing heaven by failing to spend ourselves with Christly spirit in a beautiful passion for the needy. Let us live and die for each other's sake ; this is salvation by character as Jesus taught it, and he knew.

AUTHORITY OF THE TRUTH

He taught them as one having authority.—MATT. vii. 29.

Jesus taught the Eternal truth. He did not dwell on historic truth. He took for granted his hearers' familiarity with history. We must carefully distinguish between truth essential, real,

eternal, and truth historic. Truth historic must be given on authority of the evidence submitted ; it must be learned by reading and study, and he is remiss who neglects its study. But truth essential is not to be received on evidence or authority ; it needs no proof—it is its own evidence. Real truth is axiomatic ; it involves its own assurance. There is that in the awakened soul that responds to the eternal principle, whatever it may be. The discerning soul always recognizes it at sight, and knows it to be good. Real truth cannot be proved, is independent of authority, is woven into the hearts of ten thousand generations, and all experience is its historic manifestation, working out along eternal lines.

Are the pure in heart happy because Jesus said so ? No, but because they are pure in heart. Are the meek prosperous because the Bible asserts it ? No, but because they are meek. Do not the words of Jesus or the Bible then prove any real truth ? Not at all. For essential truth cannot be proven, but finds its perpetual certitude in the response of the human soul.

But the soul needs development, else it will not respond to truth. The consciousness of a babe is incapable of realizing that things that are equal to the same thing are equal to one another. And, likewise, in a higher realm, the self-conscious heart cannot know absolutely that the soul is immortal, but the higher consciousness knows it. The seer knows this life

Is but a suburb of the life elysian
Whose portal we call Death.

He cannot prove it, but he knows it to be true.

Jesus taught the essential truth. He knew. His life proves that he knew. But it proves it only to the soul that can appreciate that life. Every teacher of essential truth must speak with authority. It will not do for him to say, "This or that person says so ; this or that book records it." He must have in his own soul the vision of the truth he teaches, or he is a second-hand teacher, and such teachers are always less effective than those who can lead the soul up to the place where they themselves have found the fountains of life. To such teachers and their disciples, heart assurance is stronger evidence than the strongest chain of logical inference. If a desire is deep-rooted and permanently lodged in the heart of the race, it is a strong evidence that that desire will be accomplished.

They were astonished at his teaching. No wonder. So few teachers dare to stand upon their own feet and say, "It is so ; I know it is true." The scribes always quoted some musty scripture, some venerable rabbi, to strengthen their position. Not so Jesus. He dared to lift anchor and swing out into the open sea on the smallest raft of truth that claimed intrinsic verity in his own soul. He did not need solemn affidavits to bolster up the eternal realities. So we all should seek to have that certitude of soul which is the correlative of being and by which we know the truth—the truth which frees the soul.

"Truth is the correspondence between consciousness and reality."

A CHAPTER OF MIRACLE

(SECOND YEAR—*Continued*)

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MIRACLE

THE material universe fails to express God's life to the full. It is ever and anon bursting its forms and spilling over out of its inadequate containers. Such overflowings of infinite power amaze us and we name them miracles.

Christ's greatest miracle is the life of Jesus. To waken the dead, to heal the sick, even to feed the hungry, was a great work, but it was a far greater to be all that Jesus was. To know the whole law and method of life was grand, but to feel and live its whole intent was far grander. To be is greater than to know.

"Seeing the multitude he went up into the mountain . . . and his disciples came unto him." This is the great miracle of Jesus, that he is still leading the race upward. That even yet, after nineteen hundred years, he is in the forefront of the world and in the people's heart is the most conclusive evidence of his divinity. This miracle possible, then all the others are possible.

A miracle is a work done in harmony with laws which we do not understand. Love has always the power of miracle. But love in its highest meaning had not even a name until the time of Jesus. All life's powers and purposes took on a higher and deeper meaning after Jesus had touched them with his wonder-working spirit. Good was better and evil was worse than ever before. The light was stronger, therefore the shadow was blacker.

Did Jesus do all the miracles recorded in the Gospels?

No human record is perfect. These records seem to violate our ideas of continuity and to put us to confusion. They confound our intellects, stultify our reason and contradict our experience. Then how are we to know the truth if we are to be confronted from time to time with miraculous and supernatural exceptions to these eternal laws—with arbitrary inconsistencies in the cosmic method?

The answer is that there are no exceptions to the divine order. God does not change. His laws are permanent as eternity. Everything is in beautiful and systematic consistency, but our difficulty lies in that we forget that there is a plane of being other than the material—a plane involving a chain of causes and forces which we as yet do not fully or clearly understand. Jesus seems to have thoroughly comprehended that higher plane of experience and to have been familiar with laws and methods of which we are ignorant. It is probable that the laws of that higher life are dominant over those of the material plane just as thought and will are dominant over gravitation.

If this be the case, we must expect that somewhere in history these higher forces will appear in the world of sense and startle us with their wonders. It is quite reasonable to expect such a thing, why not therefore in the life of Jesus? The fact is that they have done so to some extent in other lives and in other ages.

Yet Jesus never invoked his knowledge of these powers except as a contribution to the happiness of others, an illustration of the supreme law of love which his life so amply unfolded and which is the highest law on any plane whatsoever. The accounts of the miracles are probably substantially true, yet, however important they may have been in apostolic times, they are in no sense to be regarded in this modern age, as they have so often been, as great bulwarks of Christian faith.

Jesus said "Follow me," "Believe in me," "Abide in me." He accepted a belief in his works as a substitute for a recognition of his greatness of heart, but never as an equivalent therefor. "Believe me, or else believe me for the works' sake." That is a low type of faith that asks proof. "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign," and Jesus gave a sign even to it; but he gave it with a denunciation. Character is the touchstone of the Christly office, Love is the sign manual of the King of Love. Do you demand proof that I am true? Then you do not trust me and you cannot love me. Love never questions or demands explanation. To believe primarily in signs is to disbelieve in Christ. But to believe in Christ is to believe in the signs also. A faith in Christ because of his

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miracles only, is an evidence of baseness of heart. Where there is no cross there is no love.

O Jesus, help us to be so loving and true that we shall know thee as our King and love thee for thine own dear sake.

A FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

The son of the widow of Nain raised to life.—LUKE vii. 12-15.

Death is a tremendous crisis in every human history. Next to birth it is the most stupendous event in human experience. Nothing could be more logical; nothing more inexorable. Death is a universal terminal. It is also the origin of a new expression of life.

Living in a world of materials, we too easily confound spiritual things with physical. We say we have souls, whereas we are souls.

To be souls of the same order with that of Jesus is to have conscious immortality. In other words, Christ is the resurrection; he is essential life. His life is the vital element in every Christian heart. Is it surprising that a recently defunct human form should be revitalized by his word of power? Perhaps it is. It would astonish some, but not others. Everything is a wonder to the mind that is awake. It is not the fact, but the receiving heart that makes the wonder.

There is no place where life is not. There is no death. What we know as death is a heavenly herald inviting us to a more immediate life with God.

Yet we cannot say good-bye to loved ones without tears and moans and heart-break. The youth of Nain was dead. He had been relieved of all distressing sensations by the anaesthetic poison that coursed in his blood. Nature had begun to sleep and to forget its pain. The soul, no longer finding a fitting home in that fair but diseased form, had apparently moved out, locked the door, perchance had looked back long and tenderly, then turned away finally with resolute will, and, as we would say, the boy was dead.

Friends had gathered and stood in silent awe around the couch. Anon sobs broke forth in a wild storm of sorrow that surged in the widowed mother's heart. Then came the awful silence, the forsakeness of death, the full sense of an oncoming terror of loneliness and darkness.

The slow hours had passed—hours of foreboding to the stricken mother. All the tragic meaning of the scene was imaged to her vividly as she gazed where the white form lay waiting for the burial. The march to the tomb began. Soon, however, they met one who was greater than death, for his was the essential life. This stranger, who was in complete and intense sympathy with the widow's sorrow, showed the power and love of God by restoring a vital energy to the body of the widow's son.

Do you believe it? You have seen things quite as strange which you have believed, and, after all, the really pertinent question is, do you believe in God? Do you believe that God is fair-minded and true-hearted? Do you believe that, whether this story be history or not, Jesus never violated or even

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suspended any law of nature or of life? Do you believe that God never breaks His own laws? Do you believe there are higher laws which overcome the effect, for the time, of the laws with which we are more familiar? Do you believe that God is love and light and power? Do you believe with a faith that gives you peace and enables you to walk in the avenues of attainment? Is God your helper and your friend, and do you know it?

These are the vital questions.

THE GOSPEL IN CAPERNAUM

(SECOND YEAR—*Continued*)

FOLLOWING JESUS

I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.—MATT. viii. 19.

Suffer me first to go and bury my father.—MATT. viii. 21.

And he arose, and followed him.—MATT. ix. 9.

A SCRIBE, shallow, but eager and promising much, offered his life unreservedly to Jesus. The Master was a discerner of hearts and knew the man. In reply he said : “ The birds and the beasts have homes but I have none.” It was enough. We never hear of this scribe again. We shall probably never know his name. If he had only kept his promise ! When Jesus stood thorn-crowned, condemned before Jews and Romans, with blood and grime upon his noble face, if one man, and that man a scribe, had stood before him and said bravely : “ I will never leave thee, Jesus ; I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest,” what a place he would have secured in the world’s heart ! If one man without compulsion and quite for Love’s sake had been true to Jesus, how we should have loved his memory ! But this scribe is remembered only to be

despised. It was one of the greatest opportunities of history, but it was neglected.

Another would follow Jesus. Most certainly ! But there were weighty matters to attend to first, etc. You say he had a good excuse ? Not so. If his father was dead, and he thought it his duty, why was he not burying him ? He needed no excuse. The fact that he gave one leads us to suspect that his father was alive. Excuses are generally fabricated. I should not be surprised if his father outlived him. When the life of love and joy surges strong and abounding in the human heart, there will be no excuses, no apologies, no defences. There will be nothing but love and joy and sacrifice. " Let the dead bury their dead."

Take another case ; that of Matthew. Jesus said : " Follow me." The taxes were due ; no matter, here was Jesus. There was money in the publican business ; no matter, he would quit it. He loved Jesus more than profits.

But, someone says, did he do right to give up his lifework to wander through the country with a stranger, or even with a friend ? He had a paying business. Paying business ! No business pays but the right one, and that always pays. And the pay of a business is never in the money you make in it. " The life is more than meat and the body than raiment." One may become a millionaire in a business that does not pay, or starve in a business that pays beyond computation. When shall we learn that it is better to die right than to live wrong. More, it is better to die right to-day than to live a hundred years and live wrong.

Matthew sold out—quit the business. If he had not, we should not have been studying his writings to-day. He sold out and made a feast in honour of the man he loved more than money or a paying business. He had come under the mighty personal influence of Jesus and had obeyed him.

So with Peter, James and John. It was better to catch men and make them live than to catch fish and kill them. They quit the business. So must we quit the thing that troubles our conscience and thus make our conscience more acute. We must quit the thing that is unjust to other souls. We must quit the selfishness that demands too much of others—too much energy, too much work, too much thought. We must share the world's toil or we shall die in bankruptcy. He dies bankrupt who owes more than he pays in words of kindness, in tasks well done, in love overflowing to all the needy world. To follow Christ is to be like him ; to love and cheer and help wherever we are, and to be where we are needed.

JESUS AND THE MULTITUDE

When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion.—MATT. ix. 36.

The human interests the human. Under the blue heavens nothing so absorbs us as ourselves. Each soul is itself a universe whose centre is God. No other soul can explore all the vast reaches of your universe or mine. No one knows all that is in your

heart—no one but God. A multitude is an assemblage of central suns, which, though they tell something of the far away orbits of their individual lives, are yet largely eclipsed to all but God.

The human soul is a storm centre in the world of experience, a battle-ground where the conflicts of history are waged. Here the vast concerns of life and destiny are determined. Each of us is an arbiter of his own fate as well as an actor in life's stupendous drama.

The soul bursts life's barriers at every point ; it invades both past and future. It dips into the dust of the physical ; it climbs into the high heavens of pure spirit. It embodies the principles of all life. Even death serves man and is beautiful in its service.

We are both animal and angel, at once citizens of earth and inhabitants of heaven ; so like the earth that we generally regard ourselves as a part of it, so essentially divine that we are never content away from God.

Each one of us has climbed up the ladder of life from protozoon to man. Each of us is still climbing, and will never rest short of the divine. Every step is a miracle to the mind that is on the next lower plane. Love is our leader up the ladder of life. Love is the power by which we live. Love is the energy by which we rise. Love is the vision of life. Love is the method of life. Love is life's beautiful end. Love is God. God made man in His own image and likeness.

In a very sublime sense all the elements of a multitude are one, but they do not know it. They need not be as lonely as they are, for they are closer

to each other than they think. Jesus came to make humanity one, as he said, "that they all may be one, as Thou art in me and I in Thee."

Unless man has some work to do for Love's sake he is discontented. When he has no one to love him he is lovesick. When he is away from his loved ones he is homesick. All the discontent and loneliness and homesickness and lovesickness in the world is a testimony to the fact that God made man in His own image and likeness, and the man in whose heart these things are knows he is a son of God.

WITHOUT A SHEPHERD

They fainted, as sheep having no shepherd.—MATT.
ix. 36; MARK vi. 34.

Jesus knew that the human heart needs a shepherd. The paths of life are so rough and dangerous. There are so many false paths leading away from peace, and there are so many in those paths who think to serve themselves by leading others into them, that Jesus was filled with compassion for the shepherdless multitude and immediately began to organize a home missionary movement among them.

How is it we are so pitiable without the guidance of Jesus? God is the home of the human heart. He is the fold of all His sheep. Away from God, we are lonely and homesick and sad. If we do not know the way back to God we are lost. Jesus tells us how the shepherd seeks and brings back the lost one to the fold. We may be lost and not know it.

Our imaginations may be busy with vastly interesting things, but when we discover our lost condition we are lonely, fearful, distressed and almost heart-broken.

These words may not mean anything to some who read them now. They may never have felt that they were lost. They may never have been without a shepherd, but the time comes in most lives, sooner or later, when friends and loved ones slip farther away from us and quietly disappear over the margin of life into the unseen land. This world will seem less and less like a home without these loved ones. The centre of our being will be displaced. We will feel that not here but in the unseen is the fullest meaning of our lives. Every evening will remind us of a passing soul, and every night we shall feel that all this world is vain and elusive, that much even of its friendship and love is a matter of convenience or accident and is therefore shortlived.

But in our sadness there come the words of Jesus, "Be of good cheer." Some long neglected hymn or prayer of our childhood seems now to hold us close to the loving heart of our Father, and we are comforted. We begin to feel again the presence of the true, sincere friends of the spirit life. We think of how we shall meet them and see them clearly in the light of God when beautiful death shall have emancipated our souls from this body of dust, and shall have rolled back the cloud-reefs that hide the door of the palace of life, admitting us to our native heaven, with which we have already become familiar by communion with God. The words of Jesus convince us that all the sweetness and glory of life

is the possession of the good. Jesus shepherded the multitude by telling them, and having his disciples tell them, of the good news of the Kingdom of Heaven. How they listened! How they shall listen again when we tell the simple story unselfishly, directly and sincerely! When we tell the Love Story, then all shall know that the victory may be achieved before we have experienced "the tremendous adventure of death," that they are not orphans in this world, but sons of God, who shall be like Him when they shall see Him as He is.

God is the soul's home.

THE LIGHT THAT UNCOVERS

There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed.

MATT. x. 26.

Spiritual things cannot be discerned by solar light, which is for the physical world. The sun up, and all things exposed to its light are clearly seen. So when the spiritual sun rises in its full strength all spiritual conditions will be manifest. Here in the physical the act may be seen, but its meaning may not be discerned. In the spiritual order, meanings will be the chief objects of attention.

There are those in the physical world who can discern our thought; how much more clearly shall our motives be seen in the inner light that prevails in the Kingdom of God.

We hear of a great battle, or a wreck, or some other grave disaster, and the news comes to our heart with

a distinct pain, for our hearts are tender; but if we are fond of a sensation and want something to talk about, it may come with a sense of pleasure. Every such feeling will be evident to the spirit, and spiritual sight will some day be a universal faculty. Spiritual vision is normal in the Kingdom of the Spirit.

What will it be to have every other soul know exactly what is in one's thought—that selfish purpose, that sordid aim, that feeling of self-love or personal pride, that sense of repugnance, that passion of hate or disorderly love, known to all! And its roots also known. What has led up to it known. Our fight against it all known! We shall stand condemned or acquitted before the universe according to the complete evidence in the case.

All thinking shall then be done in the open, where all the world may see, where the perfect spiritual light shall reveal the true intent of the motive that prompted the act.

Even now our actions have their necessary springs and fountains. The act is no better than its motive. I have given a donation to some cause. Why? Because it was expected? Because not to would make me look mean? Because I wished to outdo others? Because I could not escape the odious task and preserve my self-respect? Or was it because I had the matter at heart and loved the cause I helped, and was utterly true? All shall be known. Some day the evidence shall appear and the entire onus of our conduct and its motive be upon us for ever.

We perform one deed and that deed changes our

being to all eternity. We are different for ever. We give a home in our heart to one affection, and its bloom or blight shall make or mar the soul throughout all the future. Every action, thought or feeling becomes a new feature of the soul, and the eternal ages shall not avail to change the fact or blot out that writing from the living tablet of the heart. The soul's capacity for the Infinite is increased or diminished by every thought, by every feeling, by every deed that goes to make the sum-total of its life.

There must be a universal order, subject to method and the laws of harmony. The tangle of facts now lying around us must have some meaning. What generalization shall next unite the multitudinous items of knowledge into one perfect harmony? What new and comprehensive thought shall bring order and simplicity to the whole system? The process of induction is in operation and we are sure some day soon to have the cue that shall clear up whole continents of difficulty. The stupid but industrious multitude will go on gathering the facts, but some clear head and heart, with a scrap of paper and a lead-pencil, will write the meaning of it all and reveal the divine tendencies of all our tangles.

There must be a universal order. There is nothing secret that shall not be made known. We see order in the larger things, the astronomic motions, the seasonal changes, the tides, the winds; why not in the small things? The Eternal Consciousness is aware. It never sleeps or is drowsy; it is thorough. It does not hurry. Eternity is time enough. We

may trust and not fear. The cosmic law is the law of our lives, and that law is in the mind and heart of One who is wise and strong and loving, One who is clothed in the beauties of the eternities.

There must be a universal order, and it must some day be revealed. For "there is nothing secret that shall not be made known."

SAVING IS LOSING

Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it.—MATT. xvi. 25.

There is no such thing as unjust gain. If it is gain at all, it is just. If it is unjust, it is more than offset by an irretrievable loss of inspiration, self-respect, or freedom. "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it."

What a paradox ! Indeed all spiritual truth is of this sort. Love your enemies. Heap coals of fire on their heads. The meek shall inherit the earth. Blessed are ye poor. Blessed are the mourners, the hungry, the persecuted. Woe unto the rich. Enter in at the strait gate. Walk in the narrow way. Let the dead bury their dead. Miracles are simply paradoxes crystallized into the living deed. When we appeal to the spiritual we transcend the physical. Thus we become miracles—paradoxes. We cease to give ourselves to a supreme effort to make a few cents' profit on the dollar, to get the highest wage, the upper hand, to outdo our rivals. These aims belong to a lower order of being, and are our inheritance from the brute. We are the children of God.

Henceforth our lives have a wider sweep, a higher value and an intenser meaning.

When the soul is penetrated by the spiritual life and its light, it acts no longer in harmony with the laws of convention. A show of hands does not deter it, no finger pointed at it by the multitude can drag it down from its highroad, however the Grundys be scandalized by its improprieties. Wall Street will call the idealist a dreamer, and will say he is unpractical or even impossible, yet he goes on proving himself quite possible and eternally practical. He scorns to "do" his brothers, but looks into the eyes of every man and woman as into the eyes of his lovers and friends. The illumined respond divinely and innocently, the others wonder what he means and call him queer and think of him as being not quite what he ought to be.

He looks wistfully between the clouds of billowy gray and fleecy white into the deep wide spaces of the infinite sky and feels in his heart a mighty loneliness till his soul is filled with the everlasting presence of the love and light of God, for nothing else and nothing less can fill it. He would rather be an angel in hell than a demon in heaven.

For the sake of the Eternal, Real Life he is willing to lose fame, riches, all worldly aims and empty nothings ; for such they seem when measured against all the resources of God's infinite heavens, revealed supremely in the love and comprehension of human hearts, the highest revelation of the Eternal. What a revealer of God's love and light was this man Jesus, whom we name the Christ. He was the supreme idealist, the most practical spirit of the ages.

Here, then, lies the supreme choice which every man and woman must make.

Save the life of self, of ambition, of worldly place, or power, or fortune, and lose the life of peace, and love, and aspiration ; or lose the life of self-love and worldliness, and gain the life that is nobler, sweeter, loftier, the life essential, the Eternal Life.

Saving is losing.

SANCTIFICATION OF WORK

A cup of cold water in the name of a disciple.—MATT. x. 42

Jesus did not name such a gift because he thought it insignificant. He knew that no finer drink ever caressed the lips of a queen. Were you ever parched with thirst ? Were you ever surfeited with man-made beverages ? Then you know the value of cold water. You know that it is a nobler beverage than man ever concocted, the finest that even God ever made. It ranks with the fresh air and the soil as the divine trinity of gifts—earth, air and water—from which flow all God's greatest blessings on the material plane—the breezes, the rains and the harvest. The more precious the gift the more of it God gives.

Jesus qualified the gift, naming cold water because it is so easy to give. He qualified the manner of giving because it is so easy not to give rightly. He wished, as usual, to emphasize the spirit and method ; hence he made little of the commercial value of the gift, but made everything of the manner of giving

it. A cup of water is better than a king's ransom only when not given in a commonplace way, only if the motive and the method be better, not otherwise.

What is the method of Jesus ?

The giver must be also a lover.

In the kingdom of God things are never done for reward. Our finest experiences, our most notable achievements, are ever those which grow out of the things we do for the sake of love and sympathy and loyalty. Where self-interest creeps in we lose distinctly, and the loss is of Eternal significance. Even highest heaven is lost if it be sought for self's own sake. The hope of a post-mortem heaven as a reward for goodness is as selfish and degenerating, if not as sordid, as a hope of a bribe for worldly service.

Oh, if we could be utterly unselfish. If we could only live and let live, love and let love. Let the soft breezes of heavenly gladness that float down from the green isles of peace hallow other lives with their beauty, and ourselves be glad of it, whether we are at present enjoying them or not. We are so often like dogs in a manger; if we cannot have the experience ourselves, we would, if we could, keep others from enjoying it, or at least, we feel hurt because we, poor souls that we are, cannot have it also.

We often act as if it were more blessed to receive than to give, more blessed to enjoy than to make others enjoy. This is all wrong. In the name of a disciple—learner in the school of Jesus, the school of love and sacrifice—in the name of the glorious

cross, I say that where there is no cross-bearing there is no love, and where there is no love there is no heaven.

Covet earnestly the best gifts. The greatest of these is love.

ART THOU HE ?

Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another ?

MATT. xi. 3.

John, the young reformer, is in prison ; his cousin, the young regenerator, is preaching and healing throughout Galilee. John's ideal was the dominance of a righteous Israel over the Romans. He had hoped that Jesus would make Jerusalem rather than Galilee the arena of his labours. He had, in times of illumination, glimpses of a grander ideal, the salvation from sin and the emancipation of the heart from its power, but he failed to hold this higher vision. Jesus hoped and determined to set free with a sublime and eternal freedom the souls and bodies of men. Even to-day no higher ideal can sway a human heart.

John, in disappointment and perplexity, possibly not unmixed with resentment, sends and asks Jesus the question, so wounding, so bitter : " Art thou he, or look we for another ? "

Jesus would not have been human had he not been deeply stirred by this question. The issue shows that he was. Yet his answer and what follows show how absolutely he held his spirit in check, even when his greatest friend had wounded him. Jesus was

tender and clear-sighted. He knew that John could not see the Messiah's work in the right perspective. John was a prophet, but did not know that the most kingly work a king can do is to heal the sick and relieve the woes that oppress his people. "Tell John the sick are healed, the blind restored to sight, the dead to life, and the poor hear the good news."

We also, like John, are too ready to think it a small matter to heal the sick and cheer the sad by building into their hearts eternal Love and truth. Even yet, we are too ready to think that Jesus failed to save Israel. We think of the multitudes who rejected the Christ, and of the state of the Jewish nation to-day. We forget that Israel stands supreme in the realm of truth and life, that the highest ideal is revealed in Jesus and the Jewish apostles and martyrs. The ideals of Jesus are supreme to-day in the religious life of the world. Jesus did not fail. He saved Israel. We should probably not have had the prophets preserved to us had not Jesus fulfilled them. He saved Israel, he saved the world by his life, of which his death was the divine climax. In that life he showed the deep eternal principles by which alone any nation can be great and free.

Jesus saves, not by intellectual creeds, not by charities organized or unorganized, not by any commercial or legal substitution of the virtue of his life or death, nor by any form or formulary; but by revealing the divine life which we all should live, and which God gives us the power to live by that Holy spirit of love which He enables us to manifest in our lives. In saving thus, he does not escape the universal law which makes every man his brother's

keeper, and every man who observes that law a vicarious sufferer for his fellow-men.

Only when we are fired by the divine zeal of love can we avail to save people. The world cannot resist love. No one who has attained the power to appreciate love can forever continue to resist it.

John passed, his work done grandly and well. Perhaps he never knew the large, sweet lesson of a living, all-conquering, eternal Love.

“He that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John.”

We must not be selfish, or provincial, or sectarian or tribal, or even too personal in our love. We must attune our hearts to the solemn music of a universal Love. But we must not forget that universals consist of particulars; then we shall know that neither battles, nor law-suits, nor strikes, are the true methods of saving the world. The world is to be saved by consecrated personality operating through beneficent life and just laws.

The tenderness and helpfulness, the sweetly reasonable truth, and, above all, the sublime and tender love and compassion of the Christ spirit, which was and is the spirit of the Cross, are needed to cure whatsoever needs to be cured in this or any other world.

COME UNTO ME

Come unto me, all ye that labour.—MATT. xi. 28.

Labour must be distinguished from work. Labour is work in the sense of toil, with fag and worry

involved. A machine sets the pace, and a tired human heart tries, oh, so hard, to match its frail hands of flesh against the hard iron hands of the machine. How could it win in such a race? It comes to the week's end with fear and failure written in dust and blood on all its weary experience.

Do you know what it means to fail to do or to know, and then to be blamed for not doing the impossible, to be cruelly denounced for not knowing the unknowable? We are often very unreasonable or even cruel because we do not know all the facts. We demand too much under the circumstances, and sincere hearts labour and suffer and are thoroughly exhausted and discouraged because of our unreasoning, ignorant and cruel demand, "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn."

When the law of Jesus, which is the law of love, is written more clearly in the hearts of men, all this cruel and unreasoning inconsiderateness will cease. No more the lash of the driver's whip; no more racing hopelessly with the rush of an iron cylinder, with the heartless pace of whirling wheels. No more keeping the pace set by a cruel machine. No longer mortification at the sense of defeat and failure.

"Ye shall find rest unto your souls."

It does not matter so much, after all, if the hands have to work hard if only rest is established in the soul. Do you know what soul-rest is? Not if you are vain or selfish, not if you are envious or treacherous, not if you are impure or slanderous; but the heart that is sincere, that tries humbly and earnestly to keep the law of Jesus, shall come into

the inheritance of soul-rest as easily as light illumines the uncovered spaces of the sky.

Jesus gives rest by teaching us how to live in harmony with law, whether physical or spiritual. Our finest experiences cannot be put into words; they can only be hinted at, and even then can be understood only by those who have had like experiences. Words are a bridge between souls. No words can build a bridge to the soulless. Many of the experiences we enjoy in the spiritual life we have not yet learned to express. The soul cast down, defeated, discouraged, looks to the light of the world; the heavens open, the bright angels let down their ladders out of the sky; they descend noiselessly, and soon all the dark places of our life are pervaded with the bright tints of heaven. The thrill of unspeakable peace and purity and holiness steals into our souls. A radiant joy and a consciousness of heaven stirs the worn heart till it throbs with a new power, and every fibre is buoyant with the ecstasy of that divine experience which we have named God, but which Jesus named Love, and without which the soul knows not the thrill of the perfect life, and is unregenerate.

“I am meek and lowly of heart.” How is it that Jesus has such personal power? Is it not that he has learned the right relation of the human soul to God? The river’s course must be in the lowest part of the basin, else it will not gather all the mighty waters into its bosom. It cannot sweep along with a strong, deep current unless it be where all currents tend to flow.

So with the heart. It must be content to be the

child of the Father. But it must remember that it is the child and inherits His nature and character, His life, abounding, glorious, eternal.

SHE LOVED MUCH

And, lo, a woman that was a sinner brought an alabaster bottle of precious oil, and standing behind at his feet weeping, wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, anointing them with the oil.—LUKE vii. 37, 38.

This story rivals in beauty and sweetness that of the prodigal. This woman was a sinner, but did a strong, sweet service for the Master. She was forgiven much, therefore she loved much. We cannot love too much nor be too wise. Wisdom tends to an orderly life ; love to life more abounding. Both are blended in a perfect balance in every noble life. How it must have moved the pure heart of Jesus to have this woman lavish a wealth of joyful and affectionate tears upon his dusty feet and wipe them with her hair ; to kiss them reverently and anoint them with the precious oil.

In the case before us gratitude was the cause of the woman's tender love and deep emotion. To be deeply grateful is often the first stage of a life-long affection. We may be sure that every sentiment that moved the heart of Jesus was kept in strictest subservience to his great life mission, and this should be the case with all his followers. How much this course may have cost Jesus we have not

the slightest hint, but when we consider the strength and universality of his sympathetic life, we are disposed to think that it did cost him much. He knew that absolute freedom is always a prerequisite of the sublimest relations between human souls, that the finest affections are deeply spiritual in their essence, while everything physical turns to ashes. His attachments were therefore purely spiritual, as ours will be when we have become like him.

But the onlookers mistook both Jesus and the woman. Bad people always feel that the unusual indicates badness. They are sure that the least deviation from the conventional is sin, forgetting that great strength of individuality takes its own course and is justified by its own heart, if only its heart be just. Conventions are therefore a product of weakness and an evidence of falling short of individual initiative, a lapse into imitation.

The woman allowed her heart to speak a most direct language. Jesus responded, as he always did, with the fullest appreciation of the truth that her deeds proclaimed.

But, oh, the burning shame and sorrow of sin. How awful to have all the world know a woman as the one who had seven devils, a heart and life completely bad. Yet the evil in this woman's life was driven out by the power of a mighty love which left her soul tender and joyful.

This woman, Mary of Magdala by repute, is probably the worst and best woman of the Bible. She is the strongest and sweetest woman of the New Testament. Mary of Bethany is the only other who can compare with her in her closeness of attachment

to Jesus. Mary of Magdala was probably a stronger character than her namesake, having conquered a more difficult kingdom and brought it into allegiance to the Master.

The most significant fact in connection with the incident of this lesson is the wonderful personal power of Jesus to uplift the human soul. We can have that power according to our capacity. But we can have it only as we use it. The eternal fountains flow unceasing into that heart that pours its love and life into the life of the people.

UNPARDONABLE

Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness.—MATT. xii. 32.

To deliberately oppose oneself to known goodness is to blind oneself to the divine light and arrest spiritual growth. This is the modern expression of the so-called unpardonable sin. As this phrase "unpardonable sin" is generally understood, it is a pernicious one, for there is no unpardonable sin. No doubt Jesus spoke intensely. Not to love is bad enough, but to spurn, slander, and ridicule Love, to shut the eyes to the light, thus making it darkness, is spiritual suicide. By recognizing God in our own souls as one with us, we find Him and are forever free. "Thou in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

The Holy Spirit is the only essential God. It is the heart of Jesus, the very life of God, filling nature

with strength and order and beauty, and irradiating with light and love the spirit of man. The Holy Spirit is the heart of the ages, the centre of history, the nature of things, the oversoul, the foundation of all being, the living energy that moves and orders the cosmos. It is the light that sparkles in the diamond and twinkles in the star. It is the beauty that awakens joy in our hearts, when we look on the green fields or the autumn woods. It is the strength that builds the mountains on their everlasting foundations and heaves the restless billows of the boisterous sea.

Sweeter and more blessed than all, it is Love, sovereign of all the divine beauties that enrapture the heart. It is the eternal Self in each one of us calling to itself in friend or lover, but finding perfect satisfaction and eternal freedom only when it finds itself in God and recognizes Him as its own very being.

O Love Eternal, to whom our souls cry out in their loneliness and darkness, help us to recognize Thee by the light of Thy presence and by the gladness that comes of being one with Thee. Let us be no more deluded by the pain and sorrow of thinking ourselves separate from Thee. We thought Thee afar off when Thou wert the very heart of our hearts. We did not dare to think of Thee as being one with us as Thou art one with Jesus. Henceforth we shall look within to find Thee, for Thou, O Everlasting Love, art our own true and Eternal Self.

When we oppose ourselves to Thee we are at war with ourselves, trying to destroy our own souls.

There is no help for us but to find Thee as Thou art, one with ourselves, clothing us with all the dignity of divinity, all the glory of the Christed heart.

IDLE WORDS

For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account.—MATT. xii. 36.

Nature is always serious—serious even when she is comic. She admits of no frivolity. In Scripture the frivolous person is called “the fool,” the “profane person,” etc.

But do not suppose that idle words are always silly words. They are sometimes quite sober or even sombre. The idle mind is the home of inconsiderateness, indifference, thoughtlessness and insincerity.

How can the human heart, capable of such multitudinous harmonies, such mighty music, lend itself to such ragtime follies? How can the soul prostitute its sublime powers to the vanities of sense indulgence when eternity is singing its sweet and everlasting song? Why will men not listen to the music of the infinite—listen till their souls are vibrating with the throbbing strains of God’s harp? Listen till the storm of harmony fills their being with a wild, sweet joy, till the tempest of song settles into the melody of peace, till even these soft notes die out and the infinite chords of a complete but soundless harmony pervade the soul, and all heaven’s music is recognized in the sweetness of the solemn silence.

Do these words mean anything, or do you regard them as visionary and unpractical? Your answer determines the fineness of the texture of your own soul.

But as to idle words, perhaps gossip is as idle as anything we know. Words that "damn with faint praise," social exclusiveness that kills with icy smiles, all insincerities, are here denounced. Hell would choke in its vain effort to hide away in horror all the effronteries of "polite society," all the frivolities and falsehoods, all the proud exclusiveness of blood or fortune or fame, all the gossip, both of the classes and the masses, which kills reputations. All lies and liars shall have their portion in the lake of fire.

Thus with truly oriental intensity is depicted the unutterable badness of all that violates the truth, but Jesus here denounces even the idle, the neutral word, and says it also must be answered for in the final accounting.

If the idle word is to be avoided, how much more the unkind, the ungenerous, the slanderous word. We listen complacently to the word that kills a reputation and aims to destroy all the good influence which it has cost a lifetime of excellence to establish. Some one is stated to have acted very badly and we join in the common execration. We want him punished, hanged, fined, imprisoned, or what not. We are condemned by our own prompt severity. There is no badness so bad as to call for punishment on account of that badness alone. It is because of a possible goodness that we try to make badness difficult by ways of punishment and pain. There

is no bad man that the most severe would not commiserate if he knew him thoroughly, knew his weakness and misfortunes, knew his motives and his fears, the passions and the terrors of his soul.

And methought that beauty and terror
 Are only one, not two.
 And the world has room for love
 And death and thunder and dew ;
 And all the sinews of hell
 Slumber in summer air ;
 And the face of God is a rock,
 But the face of the rock is fair.¹

One of the greatest of all delusions is the feeling that when two humans meet they must say something. How the discerning heart longs at times for the intense but silent friend. How much more is the quiet and undemonstrative affection of a comrade than all the wordy assurances of esteem that human lips can frame. How much more significant the tender tones of a lover than all the treasures of wisdom.

Speak the truth in love or be silent forever. Let our lives be true or let us cease to breathe.

THE VACANT HEART

The last state of that man shall be worse than the first.—MATT. xii. 45.

You know the illustration. An evil spirit is expelled, but no good spirit makes its permanent

¹ R. L. Stevenson.

abode in the vacant heart. Soon the evil spirit, with others more wicked, returns, and all make their home there, so that the last state of the man is worse than the first. "An idle brain is the devil's workshop."

In this illustration evil is personified. We are consequently too ready to suppose that evil is an independent personality, equal in power and influence to goodness itself. This can never be. An evil spirit is nothing without a home in a human heart. The nature of things is against evil, for evil is opposed to the order of being, and both faith and intuition testify to the human heart and mind that evil will ensure the failure of the individual that gives it personality. There can be no exception. This is a law of eternity.

Neither good nor evil can be a person. Both are qualities of life, and become effective only by the adjustment of a life to good or evil principles. The ally of evil—he who gives his life to be an expression of that which is contrary to the best interests of his being—is forever a disappointment and a failure.

As neither good nor evil can have being without a life wherein to express it, so neither can the human soul in active being be neutral to these principles. It must make some alliance. It cannot remain unattached to definite ethical purposes and moral methods. If evil purposes are abandoned, others must be adopted at once, else the old evils will fasten themselves upon the life more firmly than ever.

The inevitableness of evil in the vacant heart was illustrated by Jesus in his wonderfully dramatic way, so expressive, yet so easily misunderstood.

No spirit was ever created and predestined to evil. No being is more pitiable than an evil spirit—a doer of evil—for he is ever fighting a losing battle. He is doomed to defeat; it cannot be otherwise in the eternal plan.

We see, therefore, the inevitable tragedy of the vacant heart. Evil must be banished from the heart, but this can be done only by “the expulsive power of a new affection,” by new aims of a loftier nature.

The story also teaches the need of activity. Passive sentiments do not count in this active world. The positive will always dominate the negative. Industry is ever stronger than indolence. It must be borne in mind, however, that being and suffering are sometimes highest forms of doing. Nevertheless, the captain who is not steering his bark is running it on to the rocks and a mutinous crew will soon put him in irons. Work is the only safeguard of character. No idle person was ever strong or pure or even clever.

Strong Christian character is never constituted of negations. The idle brain and heart is a sure home of evil, and “seven devils” will succeed every one ousted by futile prohibitions. Nothing positively good can be constructed out of “Thou shalt nots.” The things prohibited may be hurtful, but mere abstinence from them is little better, unless positive virtues take the place of the uprooted vices. Negatives do not count. We cannot drift into the Kingdom. We are almost sure to drift the other way. We must turn the bow of our life-barque and, sailing against the winds of the world, we shall

catch the freshening breezes of heaven and so reach the harbour of the life that endures.

Let us keep the course faithfully by alliance with the spirit of all goodness. Then we shall be sure of victory, for we shall be of a valiant heart.

SPIRITUAL AFFINITIES

Whosoever doeth the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.—MATT. xii. 50.

Only spiritual relations are permanent. Others may last by reason of their spiritual elements, but for no other cause. The conditions of earth that have the most persistent qualities are those which are grounded most thoroughly on spiritual harmonies, and in soul unities. There can be no lasting bond between souls that are associated only for the sake of the individual interests involved, for the sake merely of a more economic provision of food and shelter.

It is a divinely beneficent law that persons interested in the same objects are attracted to each other, but these alliances do not constitute soul union. A spiritual and therefore an eternal union can take place only between those souls who are on the same footing as to their eternal interests. Jesus fixes the nexus of such souls in God. Only those with whom the will of God is supreme are capable of a union that will outlast the wrecks of time which carry down to oblivion all those bonds and responsibilities that the illuminated soul ignores, denying their wisdom and harmony.

The doing of God's will is made the test of all permanent relations. Activity is the only evidence of life. The nature of such activity is the only test as to the quality of that life. Doing the will of one whom we do not love is slavery.

When the gladness of love comes like a storm of sweetness into the life, moving it profoundly to its very centre, we find no joy in anything that does not manifest that love. There can be no eternal union that is not based on the glad bondage of love. All other ties shall be broken, all other relations must be dissolved.

Love is the necessary prerequisite to a life of service. Have you despaired of helping some one? You can do it if you love him, but you cannot do it under any other conditions or circumstances. Love is the divine power that makes service easy. As it is the basis of all permanent relations, so it is the final test of all spiritual values. We shall know each other in the coming life only in so far as we have loved, or are capable of loving, each other here. To be born of the same parents does not make us brothers or sisters. This permanent relation comes of the divine life affinities that burn on the holy altars of our hearts, leading us up to the sacred places where we feel our human hearts beat in unison with the strong glad heart of Eternity.

When all the bonds of earth are loosed, and the responsibilities of this life in the flesh are laid down, there will be a multitudinous host of forsaken people, forsaken because they have loved themselves above all others. On the other hand, there will be unselfish and loving but lonely hearts made

rich and glad forever by the joy of new-found eternal ties sweeter than the sons of this world have ever known.

THE SOWER AND THE SOIL

A sower went forth to sow.—MATT. xiii. 3.

Some seed fell by the wayside—in the pathway, the beaten path. Here we see at once that the soil is the subject. But it is the seed that makes the soil interesting.

In every age the truth is moulded into formulas till the soul loses its grip of the smooth-worn precepts and no longer understands them. The truth is therefore unfruitful. Imitation is a dangerous thing. There is always more vital force in originality. Those who say, "I am not original," do not know. The fact is that every day they are paralyzing their original powers by imitation and quotation, and every form of infidelity to their own God-given inspirations. Even quotation should be indulged in only for purposes of illustrating one's own thoughts; else the form, and merely the form, of another's thought will take the place of our own thinking and we no longer think for ourselves, as is the case with most of us. In sowing the truth, beware of the beaten pathway.

Some seed fell on the stony ground where there was not much soil. The seed sprang up quickly, for the soil was warm, but there was not enough root space in it, so the plant withered.

Here is pictured the shallow enthusiast who is fervent in his feeling but fruitless in his life. He is deficient in character. There is not enough of him. He thinks the quiet, undemonstrative soul is deficient in religious zeal, not knowing himself what truly deep experience is. He has not known the deathless Love, so vast and deep and joyous, that fills the fuller life with a great and sometimes solemn but silent gladness, that turns the light into music and every good into a great joy. The stony ground is the soul that is satisfied with the lesser good, and does not see or know the greater, deeper joys of the Christian experience. This enthusiastic, shallow experience was the great failing of the East.

Other seeds fall where the thorns of worldliness choke them. The lumber of life piled about such souls buries all their better qualities under an accumulation of accessories, and the essential life is choked out by minor interests. This is the great failing of the West, the failure to know what really is worth while.

Overcare for non-essentials often pushes the centres of life into the wrong place. We are too ready to think that to do right is better than to try to do right, that success is better than character as shown in faithful effort. The honesty of many a man who pays all his debts is a very poor thing. That you pay your debts does not matter so much as that you try hard to do so. We must count the cost.

You must not let the thorns grow. You yourself, the divine image templated in your visible form, are eternally greater than all that you can ever have, than all that you can ever do. Get down to

the essential. Be true to that divine life which is in every one of us. This is wisdom. This is life. Cast out the rubbish that buries your real being from the sunshine.

Finally, learn the fine art of blessing everyone that looks into your eyes. Desire this and you shall accomplish it. The sower is more interesting than the seed. The canting imitator, the over-zealous, will tell you otherwise. Do not believe him. The seed is for the benefit of the sower. The truth is for the enriching of the soul. Be sure the seed is growing in your own life.

THE SEED

The tares, the mustard seed, and the leaven.

MATT. xiii. 24.

The parable of the sower treats of the soil ; these, of the tares, the mustard seed and the leaven, deal with the seed, while the remaining parables of this chapter relate to the harvest. The seed determines the harvest. Seed is the means for the multiplication of the manifestations of life. All life is sacred ; the life of the tares, the life of the wheat also. But life should be orderly ; tares should not be sown with wheat. True, order is only an economic preference. The heart delights at times in the wildest, craziest and maddest tangle of things. But there must be nothing but disorder there. There must be no human pain or loss involved. Life must not be frivolously wasted, especially the life of the wheat.

Not even the life of the tares. Tares in their proper place are as good as the wheat. What makes tares bad is their association with what they destroy. Weeds are truant flowers, so error is dislocated virtue.

The master enjoins patience. Let both grow together. The time for separation will come. If you bring down your sledge-hammer blows upon the vices, you will surely strike some virtue to the ground. Be patient.

The mustard seed lesson is to teach us that nothing is insignificant because it is small. It teaches us inferentially also that there is nothing insignificant about life. Think of a tiny microscopic cell proliferating and developing by the power of the life within it till it spreads its lofty umbrageous arms to shelter the panting herds from the withering sunfire. Green and cool under the summer sky, in its sublime repose, it defies the scorching heat of the torrid sun.

All life is great, and greatly to enjoy it is evidence of the deepest discernment. The soul, awake and free, looks for the infinite in all its vocations. It finds its own eternal selfhood in the infinite life that shines out of the fair eternal faces of its friends. The eyes open ; they look, but through them, with far other eyes, is looking the eternal likeness of the Infinite One, who made all men in the eternal image. I look into the eyes of my friend, and see all Eternity moving towards me in a vast procession of life and light and love transcendent. It comes apace, it marches straight into my soul ; it is a new world with its own atmosphere. Yet it is my own world, now for the first time revealed to me by the eternal

light shining out through the windows of a splendid human palace built of God. This is a great and mystic joy, which few have learned to feel.

When we know anything of life we no longer wonder that an acorn can become a majestic oak which holds out its arms against the tornado and defies the buffeting of the blast.

The weakness of living things is not due to the inadequacy of the life that is in them, but rather to the fact that their life-forms are not equal to the strain of that life, urging, tugging and plunging within its weak instrument to gain access with fuller expression to the wide freedom of the eternities.

Let us not forget the leaven—that unseen influence that moves silently the mass of humanity till it leavens the whole lump. Each of us can help this process and help it wisely.

Taking larger and clearer views of life, we shall see the infinite forces back of the front line of forms—shall see the soul of things, the kindly eternal centre of those circumstances that frown so threateningly upon the timid heart. Let us, every moment, drink great draughts of that life that is the essence of love and light and service. Let us learn that we are the immortal heirs of it all, and one in substance with the Eternal.

THE HARVEST

The hidden treasure, the pearl, and the good and bad fishes.—MATT. xiii. 44-48.

This is a study of the Kingdom, the constant theme of Jesus. He wanted every disciple to be a

king and master in his own life. To sow the seed of truth, and reap in joy the harvest of Love and Light, is a privilege that Jesus claims for all.

What is the Kingdom which Jesus had in mind? There is no doubt of its great importance. He pictured it in the most elaborate figures. It is a hidden treasure, a priceless pearl, worth more than all this world's possessions. We have our goods and lands and houses, our works and our life-interests in particular, but all these material things are sure to decay. They elude us and we elude them. We are not of their substance. Even our own bodies, these instruments of life, turn again to world-stuff. How, then, in the world of death and decay, can the soul be said to be king and master of its kingdom? The only answer is that of Jesus. The Kingdom is a hidden thing, a matter of development. The seed must be sown. The life-forces must be hidden away from our view till all their fruits develop in the harvest. This hidden nature of the Kingdom is worthy of thought. He who sees only the material comforts and possessions, who regards death as a conqueror, and material treasure and its satisfaction to the human heart as paramount, is not master in his own life, is not free. He who is restrained by his delight in his material possessions from using them in the furtherance of the life of love is a slave, for he is owned by, instead of being the owner of, his possessions.

The secret of freedom from the slavery of sense, the power to command the kingdom of one's life, is to be found in right relation with God. Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." Leaving all

theological questions aside, we must come into some such consciousness before we shall be strong. How can we fail to love God when we are consciously one with Him? How can we fail to love our neighbour when we realize that, in essential life, we are one with Him? The same Eternal Spirit gives to both its infinite life; we are, therefore, one with each other and one with God. But how utterly we fail to realize this supreme truth.

Matter is the clothing of the real. The fields and trees and skies are the vesture of life, and shall be folded up and laid away. Then the real life shall be manifest to all discerning hearts in new habiliments of spirit form.

The age has come when the masses press into the Kingdom. Many are finding the hidden treasure and are coming into the higher realization of life, dimly and vaguely at first, to be sure, but surely nevertheless. A new age is dawning—the Kingdom is come—and all may be seers and kings, for all may realize that the Spirit of the Eternal is finding joyous expression in their own lives.

This realization is the finding of the pearl of great price, in which alone we have strength, and freedom, and life abounding. A deep abiding peace, pervasive, sweet, perennial, is attained. We develop a strong spiritual equipoise; we feel that the avenues of Eternity are all open to us; our feet can run in the highways of heaven; we are free to enjoy the celestial air and drink deep of life's clear fountains, nor thirst again, the fountain being within us.

The light and the darkness, summer and winter, the calm and the storm, are equally acceptable to

such experience. It is held high in the serene quiet of the unseen life. We are strong and defiant to all adverse forces. We are partners with the mighty God of Love, who will accomplish all that is in His great heart. There is no place for despair in all the realms of God.

Everything is whispering hope to the soul of him who sees God and knows that the Kingdom is in His hands. To such a one life is a sublime drama, the product of deathless Love, an unutterable, eternal joy. Such is the fruitage of the Kingdom even here.

MISSIONARY METHODS

And he sent them forth to preach the kingdom of God. And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staff, nor wallet, nor bread, nor money, neither have two coats.—LUKE ix. 2, 3.

Many a fireside philosopher and comfortable stoic has commended plain living and high thinking to his fellow-men, himself choosing rather plain thinking and high living, but when Jesus said, "Take no money and only one coat," he was commending to his followers a strong and simple course of which his own life was the highest warrant. Jesus could consistently demand a life which few others would dare to counsel, their own practice would so discount their precepts, their ideals so greatly transcend their accomplishments.

The river can never rise higher than its source. We are not likely to lift anyone to a moral level

higher than that life-road in which we ourselves walk.

Jesus trusted his disciples. The principle of not trusting those who have not yet proved themselves worthy was not adopted by the Master. He did not hesitate to send the disciples into the world's great harvest field again and again to carry the precious message of the Kingdom. It may be said that Jesus knew his proxies, and was assured of their worth and efficiency. But are we sure even of that? How about Judas? The fact is, it is best always to trust men till we learn by experience that they cannot longer be trusted. If they think you doubt them they cannot serve you as they otherwise would. It was a tremendous venture to commit the noble and lofty message of Jesus to these unsophisticated men. It was a greater risk not to do so. True, they did not understand the Master very well, much less his teaching, but to love Jesus was a better equipment than to understand him. Besides, they could not truly love him without in some measure understanding him.

It is a momentous work to say the truth concerning Jesus and his mission and to do his works before men. The wonder is that the disciples succeeded at all. However, they did succeed, and so thoroughly that even the devils were subject unto them, which may mean many things.

The task of these disciple missionaries was not unique. It is our task also to show to men throughout the wide, wide world the beautiful, sweet spirit of love that was in Jesus. To love a good, strong upright soul with all the heart and mind and strength

is a perfect ecstasy ; to understand such a soul is a great and notable attainment ; whereas both to love and understand such a being is heaven itself.

Is it at all believable that the disciples did the miracles ascribed to them ? Why not ? The personal power of the Christ, that irresistible thrill of exaltation flowing from the deep, divine, perennial fountains of his God-nature, was not an accident ; it came of that quality of his being which made him a wide open book, where things divine abundantly appeared.

We must not stand afar off, thinking that we are not also of the God family, for God made us in His own image and likeness. We are of the essence of divinity ; we are in that unity with God which explains all miracles, all vital religion, and it is that unity which is the source of the thrill and vision and perpetual inspiration to holiness and grace, which is the heritage of all who are members of God's family, inhabitants of His home, and dwellers in His heart. I, even I, am a son of God, commissioned to go forth daily representing Jesus, with the power of Heaven in my heart to speak the word of truth and grace through a life of service and comradeship.

We should learn from this study to cultivate the missionary spirit. Spiritual values are enhanced chiefly by increasing the number of those who enjoy them.

We should also learn the nobility of simplicity. Originality, which is the measure of our own particular value, is fidelity to our own insight into truth and history. It is a straight-out expression

of what is in us by virtue of our divine relationship, without the frills of classicism or the bias of convention. It determines the force and interest of our personality.

TRADITIONALISM

Ye make the word of God of none effect by your traditions—MATT. xv. 6.

God loves to be loved. Religiosity is not religion. To go to church and think that therefore we are better than others who do not go ; to be respectably religious, take the sacraments and be counted in the flock—all this is not piety. When an act becomes merely a rite it loses its religious significance. While it is the spontaneous expression of the heart it has a deep and divine meaning, but merely ritual observance of any religious rite robs it of all its intrinsic beauty and makes it commonplace.

A voice from the heart of the age is what this age most needs. He alone is a true prophet who says the word that will show the people just where they are and what is the next imperative step to take.

Here we are, you and I, under the blue sky and among objects of thrilling interest, but nothing under the wide heavens is more interesting than you and I. You and I, therefore, demand the first consideration. The highest interest of the human is humanity. Each of us must see that the other is well-cared for and living in the serene light of God's

love before he can afford to give consideration to any other interest whatsoever.

We are too easily diverted from our real life-interests to cleave our way to our proper end. The means used to further the interests of life absorbs all life's energies and becomes itself the chief object of our furtherance. The representative of the people goes to the House where he should represent them, but manifests no other purpose than to represent himself, first, last and always. We support the Church to establish Christianity, and end the matter by making Christianity establish the Church. So ardently do we admire the earthen vessel that we quite forget the divine treasure it contains.

We must not let ourselves forget that the deep and vital questions of the race are those which affect the human heart and mind. Nothing in the world will ever compensate for the wreck of a human heart, the living, loving palpitating heart, that grieves and rejoices, fears and confides, loves and understands.

God accepts our gifts, regarding those to whom we give them as divine proxies. Jesus says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me." He accepts such service as a love-gift to Himself. No service has any value unless it is done in love. Have you watered a daisy or thrown crumbs to a sparrow? Have you smiled upon some child, or spoken kindly to a stricken heart? It was a gift to God, a holy sacrament.

Institutions, however venerable, traditions, however sacred to the memories of our fathers, if they

serve not man to-day, are only a hindrance to the ongoing life of the race. That which was once revered as essential to the best life of the nation may to-day be only an incumbrance, making God's word to the heart of the present ineffectual by denying the truth which He reveals by one or other of His many voices.

Live your life straight out from God. This is the only way to give your life to God. Be sweet, true and reasonable, then you shall be strong, for God will fill you with His life.

DEVELOPMENT BY EXPRESSION

That which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man.—MATT. XV. II.

By contrast, pollution suggests purification. We shall, therefore, deal with the perfecting of character by expression and, generally, with the part expression plays in the ongoing and upgoing of the race, the anabasis of life, whence there is no retreat.

All organic nature expresses the word of life that is in it. Only the dead is expressionless. The word of life in nature and in man is God.

What is God? All that was before creation; all that is still uncreated; all that will not decompose, or burn, or freeze, or die; that which organizes matter and sustains its organization; that which makes function possible, whether chemical, mechanical, vegetal, vital, physical or psychical; all that cannot be weighed against matter or measured with

a foot-rule ; all noble desires, sentiments, emotions, aspirations, inspirations ; these are the pulsings of His heart.

God is everywhere revealing His life. The sky appears inert, but it is not ; it changes all the time, and by its changes we learn that what we term "star-drifts" never drift without a guide ; that nothing in all the universe drifts without God ; that God's will is for orderly motion and mathematical accuracy and precision. In the plants also is revealed the life of God. Even the seed-leaves are an open book of prophecy proclaiming the future structure of the plant and how it shall put forth its gifts of life, how the flowers shall show God's life in fragrant and graceful expression, and tell us many things in explication of the divine will and heart, so that one is impelled to exclaim, "All the fragrance in the world is Thine, O God. The roses that bloom on the hillside emit the odours of heaven, and incense rises to Thee from the lilies laid so lovingly upon the bosom of the dead. All the beauty in the earth is Thine, whether it rests unconscious on the summer sea, or smiles consciously in the eyes of Love, or blossoms fair and fragrant in the flowers—all is Thine. Thine is the glory, the fragrance and the beauty, the eternal peace, the everlasting power, and Thou shalt reign in Thy kingdom for evermore."

It is in man that we study expression to the greatest advantage. Two methods of expression are open, the selfish and the unselfish. The selfish way is prompted by personal comfort, inclination, desire ; the unselfish, by the accumulated divine

energies that grace the life with their charm and perfection of beauty and meaning. To let love hold sway in the heart and direct the life from Love's omnipotent throne is to emparadise all our environments, to glorify the life with unselfish joy and to make the earth in a very real sense a veritable Kingdom of Heaven.

To hear in all nature the voice of God ; to discern the smile of God, to feel the love of God, so strong and sweet and universal—this is to make the earth rise above the earth, the human to transcend the human, to apotheosize man and change him into the likeness of God.

We look carefully around us, but see no evidence that God has any means of expression other than by His life in nature and in man. It is evident, therefore, that it is His will that we should be divine in all the essentials of our characters and being. God is everywhere, from crystal to Christ, with eager joy urging nature and man to harmonious expression of the being and character of the divine. The world seen is but a visible expression of the world unseen or real ; the light of the sun is but the radiant expression of that viewless light " that never was on sea or land." The bird-songs and wind-whisperings are but hints of the soundless music within, which is yet the essential harmony. Nothing is outside of consciousness. Thus, the light within, unseen and undiscoverable except by the divine yearning in every God-born soul ; the soundless harmony, God's music of love in every heaven-illuminated heart—these are the fountains of expression which increase our perfections. Meats

are matters of scientific and gustatory choice with which Jesus did not choose here to deal. Even the washing of dishes and the cleansing of hands are sometimes secondary matters.

Like a great comet, always obedient to the solar sway, man too is projected into space. The divine power never fails him. Moving in harmony with the divine will, he accomplishes by devotion of a consecrated personality all the work that was given him to do. He comes back like the great comet to the sun, and God whispers to his heart, "Well done." Have faith in God. It will give you peace. But the great joy comes to the soul that feels, "God shall have reason always to have faith in me." To the trusty one only, God says, "Enter into joy."

To be living exponents of God's love and light and power is the chief end of man. But we are timid and fearful as to the expression of our life. We see the work and service of others, and despair of ever doing any such work ourselves, forgetting that only by expression can we ever be all that is possible to us. The experts have become specialists by service, and the drudges labour at their toilsome tasks because they lack faith in themselves and will not initiate the least venture into other more interesting or more lucrative fields of service. When they do venture they are almost overwhelmed by their self-consciousness and the fear of failure that blights their efforts. One should have no other thought in the midst of one's work than that of perfect results.

What shall we say of words as a means of expression? Seldom does a superlative truth find

utterance in words, yet the silences are everywhere bursting out with truth that urges on to expression. When, however, a mighty truth has once found a home in words that fit their music to its solemn march over the eternal highroads, the ages never cease to sing that song.

The task of civilization is to make history the perfect expression of God's mind, for only thus can the race achieve its highest good and be crowned as humanity triumphant.

THE LARGER MESSIAHSHIP ; OR, THE UNIVERSAL CHRIST

(THIRD YEAR)

NIGHT IN THE MOUNTAIN

And it came to pass in those days, that he went up into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.—LUKE vi. 12.

JESUS did not do this as a duty, much less as a penance. It was a sweet delight to him to spend the night with God. The cool Syrian breeze he felt as a divine caress, and the distilling dews of the mountain were a calm assurance to his heart of the permanence of the divine care—the everlasting continuity of God's love. It was a night spent with the deepest joy regnant in his glad heart. The solemn and spacious silences were filled with love's sweet unutterable music while his soul kept its tryst with its lover and friend and God.

Have you ever heard in the silence the music of God's voice? Have you ever felt a sweet and subtle power steal through your consciousness like the rare music from the chords of some unseen but heavenly instrument? Do you ever feel that God

is with you a thousand times more really than if a voice were to say so, or even a form appear to assert the truth of such a consciousness? Have you ever realized the actual divine presence? Has it ever come surging like a flood of light and love through all your being, turning earth into heaven, filling all your mind and heart with the light and glory of God? This is the God-consciousness, the first condition of enduement with personal power.

But what has this to do with the prayer? It has everything to do with it. If our notion is that prayer is only petition we do not like to pray. When we rise to adoration and loving communion then we delight in prayer.

Jesus did not publicly announce that he would spend the whole night in prayer. Love is something of a secret virtue. It is of the essence of love that it wants to be alone with its object. Alone with God! How sweet a privilege!

The thought of the young child concerning prayer is that of supplication in order to persuade God. Intercession has the same object, but chiefly for others, and therefore is more unselfish. The prayer of communion, meditation, inspiration by the spirit, is a more mature development which brings to us a personal power by the inflow of God's life. This is the attitude of the philosophic Christian, and of the man of deep thought and decisive action. It is a manly view of prayer, and one that makes for large results, especially when the thought and faith are concentrated on proper ends. But is even this the highest conception regarding prayer?

There is another view, even more lofty. It is

that which regards prayer as God-consciousness—the realization of the presence of God. This transcends all other views of prayer because it alone makes all the others effective. It is the attitude of the lover which prompts us to exclaim, “I and the Father are one.” It is the only conception of prayer which would make us care to spend a whole night in its exercise. Such an experience gives a conviction that God’s love is more than a doctrine of the church, more than a philosophical hypothesis. It gives the soul the assurance that God is a present, personal power in the life, giving to it all its strong, pure and delightful qualities.

Let us regard the prayer hour as a tryst with the Lover of our souls, whither we fly to be at rest “in the calm light of everlasting life.”

A FOUNTAIN OF HEALTH

There went virtue out of him, and healed them all.

LUKE vi. 19.

The personnel involved in any interest is its most significant element. Radium communicates to other substances its own lustrous power. The magnet electrifies certain other metals when brought in contact with them. Everything has its influence in all realms of nature and the soul.

Disease is contagious ; health also is communicable. Sin is corrupting, but righteousness has an influence even more powerful, an inspiring energy of which the miasm of evil is only the bad reverse.

No man can be God-conscious without being a centre of divine influence, a source of heaven-accumulated power. The human spirit cannot long hide its essential life quality or fail to be an influence more or less potent over other lives. The company of the good is ever an inspiration to goodness.

Jesus was a heaven-saturated man, and we must believe that the wonderful intensity of the life of the early Christians was in a large measure due to the personal power and real presence of the Master. These earnest people—a mere handful in number—stood up against a corrupt empire, and set themselves the herculean task of regenerating a world. The empire, with its iron hand, banished them, imprisoned and tortured them, put them to a cruel death, yet to their sublime faith serenely arched the beautiful rainbow of promise in the sky of God's Kingdom, and their early successors saw the steel-clad hosts of Rome and the crown of the Caesars pass away; saw this ancient Mother of Nations fall in ashes, while the vision of that Christ who was hanged upon a Roman cross grew brighter and fairer in the hearts of the people, till to-day he is acknowledged as supreme by the dominant nations of the world, because he was "true to manhood and to God's supreme design," because he believed that man is greater than symbols, greater than old scriptures, greater than institutions, greater than organized nations, thrones and empires.

So, too, we must learn that human interests, conceived in love and truth and righteousness, are paramount over all other considerations; that Moses was greater than Egypt, Daniel greater than

Babylon, that Paul was greater than Rome, and Jesus is greater than all the organized forces that stand against his Kingdom of righteousness and truth and love.

As yet we have hardly dreamed of the power that God would pour into any one of us if we would combine large faith and generous love with absolute honesty and common sense.

To such a personality, all that is truly helpful and remedial in "Medical science," "Christian science," "Mental science," "Faith healing," or any other method which helps, belongs, and should be used in as far as it is found to enhance human interests and increase the intensity of human experience.

Let us strive earnestly to live constantly in the atmosphere of heaven—in the company of God. Then our spirits shall develop till they radiate the life of God and become lustrous with that perfect strength and grace of character which made Jesus lovely, glorious, sublime.

WHO ARE HAPPY?

Blessed are ye poor, hungry, weeping. Woe unto you rich, full, laughing.—LUKE vi. 20-25.

How little the Father cares what we have, but how infinitely He is concerned as to what we are. He has made adequate provision for our physical natures because the physical is the temporary home of our real selves, which are His chief care.

Our finest works of art and architecture return to dust without His protest ; our vastest wealth He quite ignores, except as it helps to make or mar our characters.

When Jesus said, " Blessed are ye poor—woe unto ye rich," he did not prescribe poverty as a cure-all of evil, or condemn riches as a sure road to destruction. The children of the Kingdom are essentially rich, and men of the world, regardless of their property, are utterly poor. In this text Jesus sounds a warning note and not a condemnation. He recognizes the fact that riches are an unspeakable threat, and the dangers of wealth need constantly to be pointed out. Nevertheless, the text is not a judgment. Jesus said, " Judge not," and Jesus heeds his own precept and condemns no man. He judges no man, but is the judge of all men, only in the sense that his words of warning and wisdom were suitable to all men ; and because of their wisdom, truth, and correspondence with the nature of things, they shall finally judge the race. He said, " I judge no man. The words that I speak, they shall judge you in the last day."

What, then, are the comforts and blessings of hunger and poverty and grief? Only experience can answer. But experience answers with authority and without hesitation.

The poverty that Jesus means is that which is compulsory, or else suffered for a good cause. It is heroic poverty. It is the grief that is the mother of gladness. The riches that he warns against is that which ignores the poverty of others.

They are truly rich who say, " I will have no gift

that my brother cannot have on similar terms." For such there is no curse. On such no woe can fall ; for all deprivations for the sake of others are a joy to such a spirit. These are the poor in spirit whose present inheritance is the Kingdom of God.

It all amounts to this, that Love is the fulfilling of the Law. The life of love is the only true life, the only life worth living. There is no caste in the Kingdom of Heaven. The social law—the law of service—prevails and is enforced, not by coercion, but by the sweet reasonableness of love's almighty power.

Finally, the rewards of the lesson are not deferred to the hereafter, however some may deem that they are. Jesus gives us no post-mortem remedy for poverty. What, then, are the consolations of the poor. Poverty gives infinitely better opportunities for being, like Jesus, kingly in spirit than does the position of oppressive or even indifferent wealth. The wrongs of the poor will some day be redressed, even here. We should remember that the poor are sometimes nobly powerful, while the rich are abject and essentially base.

POSSESSION—GOOD AND EVIL

The herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea.

MARK V. 13.

In estimating the peculiar significance of this story of the demon-possessed man, we are reminded that the destruction of a herd of about two thousand

swine was, to a Jew, a moral triumph as notable as the killing of the Dragon or the slaying of the Gorgon. To a Jewish mind, such an incident would have an intense ethical significance which the money value of the herd could not offset. Indeed, it is difficult for us of this Christian era to realize the intensity with which a Jew in those times abominated swine.

But Jesus, though he was a Jew, was no bigot. Those who chronicled the record of Jesus' life had not all the same "sweet reasonableness" that was ever ascendant in their Master. It is possible that they sometimes recorded as history what was merely parable, and this may have been the case here, for, to permit the Gentiles to eat swine flesh and so to allow the guilty only to suffer, if guilt there were, seems to have been a much safer course than to drown two thousand swine and let their putrid carcasses befoul the waters of a small lake in a hot country, thus poisoning the air and water and endangering the lives of the whole community, both Jews and Gentiles, the innocent and the guilty.

What is the lesson of this story?

Various interpretations have been offered. One common view is that Jesus here revealed himself as The Son of God by showing his power to cast out the demons, and, indeed, that this was his chief purpose. Another view is that in this story Jesus emphasized the fact that a human heart may become the willing home of passions so selfish and impulses so base that even swine would refuse to be subject to influences so bestial. Others think the lesson shows that one man's heart can harbour

a devil-legion sufficient to drive two thousand swine to destruction.

All such theories are merely applications of the story to illustrative purposes, and are subject to the risks which always threaten the deductive process when used to support a theory. The lesson which seems to be the most simple, valuable and useful is that Jesus loved and pitied a man who was in great distress, that he helped that man and uplifted him, and made him sober, sane and manly, and was what every man should be, a brother and a friend.

The general subject of spirit-possession has its good as well as its evil side. Aspiration is the practice of opening the soul to the inspirations of heaven: lust is desire directed towards things forbidden because of their incompatibility with our highest good. Aspiration is that divine selection which throws the heart wide open to those higher influences which tend to noble uses and significant aims; but the soul may open its portals to base and baneful impulses with an eagerness quite worthy of a better cause.

The Christian conceives all influences of a moral and spiritual order as having their fountain in a personal source. Christian thought knows no impersonal moral influence, recognizes no spiritual force ununited with consciousness, no ethical inspiration outside the will or independent of intelligence. Whenever moral or spiritual forces move the life of the soul, either with benefit or bane, they are ascribed to persons, either divine, demonal or human. Those quiet but mighty forces that

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steal with divine healing into our souls when we are environed by nature are the encompassing arms of our eternal Lover, God.

The breeze is the sigh of an infinite bliss,
The Love of God is the heart of the world.

We know it because of the music it stirs to holy vibration in our own souls.

All the needs of a human soul are satisfied by a constant appeal to the Spirit. They can be satisfied in no other way. Divine possession is the only solution of the human problem in any form that problem can possibly assume. To be God-conquered is the only way to be a divine conqueror, for when we are thus possessed we are one with the Father of our spirits. Failing this divine possession, we shall be possessed of demons. There is no other alternative. It is a final law.

THOU ART THE CHRIST

Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am ?

MATT. xvi. 13.

No vulgar curiosity as to what the people thought of him or were saying about him inspired this question of Jesus. So much of the welfare of men depended upon their estimate of him that the question was entirely unselfish in its motive.

On another occasion he asked, "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" and showed that the question was not fully answered by saying that

he was the son of David. Indeed, this seems to have been the chief point of his question on this occasion. "The son of Man" is a phrase he often used, but he so highly commended and approved the answer of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God," that we are led to infer that he wished to impress upon the sons of men their relationship to the living God. This he did by showing his own relation of sonship.

This was an important feature of the Christly mission, to convince men that even they, poor, despised and often self-degraded, are of the family of God, children of His home, the offspring of His heart.

It was not enough to proclaim the Kingdom and the King. No consolation can come out of the Christ message unless these truths have some personal relation to the human heart. He proclaimed that God is love and light and strength and holiness, but these truths, however excellent, are not particularly grateful to the hearts of man, unless they, too, are, in their eternal, essential nature, of the same constitution and made in His likeness. When, however, they perceive that they are divine in their own essential being, they begin to seek, and soon discover within themselves, the perpetual source of all these divine essences. They find God living in the holy of holies of their inmost being, and forever at home in their hearts, ready to reign by inspiration through their wills, in purity and power.

O lonely heart, wandering, as you have thought, alone in the world, over the bleak reaches of a desert wild, know and remember that God, the Eternal,

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is not only your Father, but He is even yourself in the highest and most essential identity of nature and being. Remember that He is not only your refuge and your habitation, He is your own essential life, and love is yours, and light, and strength, and joy, and victory, for God is the strength of your life and your portion forever.

How we should love and honour Jesus, who has revealed to us this splendour of glory and beauty in a personal relation and constitutional identity with God the all-true.

Established in knowledge of our essential identity with the nature of God, we have the basis of an inter-human relation of a similar character. God is closer than a father; so man is closer than a brother. The fact that I love another human heart is but an evidence that my soul is calling to itself in that other life, which is my other self, yet not another.

Our oneness with God is but the eternal proof of our oneness with one another.

Peter did not yet realize the full meaning of his words. No doubt he thought of Jesus as the coming king of Israel, who was to free it from its temporal yoke. He needed the light of the resurrection and Pentecost to open his vision and clear the sky of truth in his own being; then he knew that Jesus was the Christ in a larger sense than his disciples had supposed.

THE LARGER MESSIAHSHIP

Lord, help me.—MATT. xv. 25.

Important issues are prominent in this lesson. We believe Jesus was divine, but all attempts to support any preconceived opinions as to his divine nature, any stultification of our own fairmindedness, any abuse of our own intelligence and reason, any forcing of our judgment as to the fair interpretation of this narrative must be strongly deprecated as being unnatural and unwarrantable. All such methods are sure in the end to make our study ineffectual, give vagueness to our thought and separate us from Jesus.

We must remember that Jesus “grew in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God.” It is character which alone can give favour with God, all other theories to the contrary notwithstanding. It is reasonable to suppose that Jesus did not in his early childhood arrive at a complete conception as to the scope of his mission and ministry, that he did not, even in the early days of his ministry, realize the universality of his Messiahship. We should expect his ideals to grow as he applied his inspirations to the problems which his experience brought before him from time to time.

The incident of our lesson illustrates the development of the conception which Jesus entertained regarding his own mission. In his childhood he could not have escaped the general impression which regarded all Gentiles as dogs, the Jews alone being regarded as peculiarly God’s people a view which

even the Gentiles share in a measure down to the present day.

What wonder that Jesus, steeped in this environment, and burdened with the Messiahship of his own nation, should hesitate when the scope of his work was greatly and suddenly widened in a splendid inspiration which taught him to regard those of an alien race as equally God's children and his own brothers.

Jesus answered her not a word. He knew how great was her faith. He did not need to sift her to find if there was any faith in her. His sympathies were aroused, else he would have repelled her at once. How he longed to heal the daughter of that broken-hearted mother. But she was not of the race of Israel. To such he believed he was not sent, and stated as much. Here was a great test. Jesus was used to the narrow traditional view, but he was no slave of the past, not even of his own, much less that of others. His agile spirit leapt the wide chasm and reached the ground of sympathy to which his larger vision and growing ideal called him. He stood henceforth on the plane of the broader humanities, and the universal love-spirit was hereafter the measure of his heart.

Jesus is discovered in this incident in the very process of development. To one unversed in sophistries there seems to be no other interpretation. Does it not bring Jesus closer to us when we learn that he grew as we grow, that he was not a monster babe with complete manhood and divinity pent up in his little form all ready to burst forth as a sage, a hero, a god, as soon as he could walk and talk.

Yet he was each of these. The inference then must be that these characteristics developed in him, that he manifested perfectly the divine inspirations of each moment as they came into his pure soul. He was not merely a mirror—a colourless reflector of the divine, he was a man who gave character and living force to the visions and ideals which heaven sent into his spirit for manifestation on the earth among men.

What less are we, and what less is our mission? Yet how far less our faithfulness to our high calling. Let us in the life and spirit of Jesus live the Living Gospel before men, and show God in all His beauty and Love and Glory to a race hungry for all the sweet influences and forces of a life of love and service.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Ye can discern the face of the sky. How is it ye do not discern the signs of the times?—LUKE xii. 56.

We lost the power to prophesy when we ceased to practise the art of prophecy. We always lose what we do not use.

Astronomers have the best eyesight. It is because they have looked upon the lunar mountains, the rings of Saturn, the belts of Jove, and the snowcaps of Mars. They who always ride can no longer walk, for they have lost the use of their feet. They who rely upon memoranda lose the use of their memories. The inhabitants of cities are never weatherwise. They have forsaken the wide-open sky, which is the chief book of weather wisdom.

So it is with history.

How few know what it meant for Miltiades to win at Marathon or Scipio at Zama ; what weighty consequences hung on the coming of Caesar and Hengist to England ; what a right-about-face to the history of Europe was the defeat of the Saracens at Tours by Charles Martel, and what a blow to Christendom fell when Mohammed II. took the city of Constantinople. But even in the more brutal ages battles were not the most important events. Socrates was greater than Alexander ; Paul was greater than Caesar, and the entry of Augustine into Britain was more significant than that of William and his Norman chiefs. Even the Dark Ages were fruitful in the evolution of civilization. In our own day such men as Darwin and Drummond have made a new picture of life, where faith is no longer a mere background, but a delightful consciousness that God is a present living Father, Friend, and Lover. These later words of life are but a recognition in the human consciousness of the beautiful revelations of Jesus to the human heart.

God wants us all to be prophets. " Why do ye not discern the signs of the times ? " asks Jesus.

All the future is in the present. Understand the present and you shall understand all times. All the important events of to-day have their spring in the eternal rock-beds of history.

Hitherto we have stumbled now and then into greatness. Now we know God's will, therefore to do it is the only claim to greatness. The wisdom of Eternity must be tested by the experience of time, but the observations of practice must never

exclude or supersede the illumination of inspiration in the soul, as they have too often been permitted to do. All the proprieties and conveniences of this earth-life should be observed, unless the champions of these proprieties seek in the least to clip the wings of the soul. If this be done, sooner or later there is sure to come a rude and seemingly cruel shock—a bolt electric out of the sky that clears the horizon of life and holds the heavens wide open to the heart. Then life is seen in its essential, eternal formlessness, and we see once for all that this life is for the development of the life that is eternal, universal, and impersonal. Let us cultivate a consciousness of the life eternal—the essential and proper life of the soul of man.

DENIAL OF SELF

If any man will come after, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.—MATT. xvi. 24.

Many persons, in obedience to their interpretation of the law of Christ as expressed in this passage, have renounced the comforts of life, sacrificed all the natural and reasonable conditions of existence, abandoned human society, even their dearest friends, lived as hermits, celibates, or even as mendicants.

Nevertheless, the deliberate purposes of life rarely, if ever, involve so wide and so permanent a departure from the common usage. Some divergence from the easiest and most convenient course must sometimes be wise and right, or even imperative; some difference is sure to exist between the life of greatest

comfort and the path of final good. This digression from the course of our inclination and convenience is called self-denial, and is the only possible evidence that we have any character whatever as individuals.

Remove all the restraints from any life—restraints of law, civil and moral, of reputation, of convention, of belief in rewards and punishments, whether civil, social, or supernatural; take out of the mind all fear of consequences, and should we feel it necessary to be kind if no one heeded, to be honourable merely for the sake of our self-esteem? Would none of us be impure if there were none to know our fault—not even God? What we would be, unrestrained, is our essential character; what we would do if free, that is our real life. We are no better than our hearts; what we wish is what we are. Our motives are our real selves.

But words have many meanings. Language is often used to hide rather than to reveal truth, and although this was not the case with Jesus, we may be sure he did not mean that our real selves were to be denied, so much as that all disorderly, inharmonious or excessive out-goings of life are to be curbed and educated in harmony with the law of life as it is revealed in Christ. The true self is the likeness of God, the eternal, spiritual principle within. It is the shrine within the temple where God dwells in the holy of holies of every man's heart. This is not to be crucified. Neither is the physical life in any way to be impaired, for it, too, is holy and must be conserved. So with the mental and moral natures. But for these very reasons, all tendencies that are not making for the best and highest develop-

ment of the whole being must be curbed and denied. The desire for unearned and unpermitted ease, the tendency to make the less helpful interests supreme, and to relegate the spiritual and affectional nature to a shameless oblivion—these must be watched and guarded against.

In a word, our whole being must be brought into harmony with the will of God. This means that we must nail upon the cross all those desires, however dear they may be to us, that lead us away from God. We must cleave to what is pure and lovely and of good report, which means that we must hew our way to them and there abide till we are free.

TRANSFIGURATION

And his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.—MATT. xvii. 2.

When Moses, Elijah, and Jesus conversed on great themes it was meet that the scene should be fitting. The mountain height, with its far, free view of heaven: the ozonic breezes, cool and gentle, from the far-stretching Mediterranean; the soft Syrian sunshine, falling from the radiant skies upon the purple hills and far away dying into the calm blue surface of the sea—these were fitting accessories to that memorable tryst.

But neither the mystery nor the majesty of the mountains, nor all the deep sublimities of space, nor any circumstance of nature, could transform the soul as could the inspiration of a world-absorbing

theme and converse thereon with sympathetic friends.

These exalted heroes, in common things care-free, were strong, regnant, and exulting in their God-conscious illumination. What wonder that the three disciples were so dazed by the bewildering beauty of that splendid vision. In that perfect picture of the Father which the Son of Man painted upon the canvas of life, no detail is more illuminating than this of the hour with Moses and Elijah on the mountain-top. Here, all the light and beauty of God are superlatively manifested in Jesus' perfect and transfigured face.

What is the lofty theme whereon these three hold converse in the luminous heights? It is the death which he is about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Is death, then, an accomplishment? Death is the supreme accomplishment. We dwell too much upon death as the cessation of life. We should think of it rather as the final, the highest accomplishment of life. Christian death is always a divine triumph.

When the eternal, undying Self, the selfless Self, the Self that makes us free, passes death sentence in God's name upon the baser self, the selfish self, the self that makes us slaves to desire, to circumstance, to all that should be under our power, then we are free and alive forevermore. Is not this the essential verity which the death of the physical body is intended to teach? Does not the death of the physical beautifully symbolize the mortifying of those lower propensities which must die daily, if the true, eternal and divine in us would have freedom and make progress? The accomplishment of

this death is such that the contemplation of it would surely transfigure any man.

Or do you think this is impossible? Is it, then, inconceivable that your face should shine as the sun? Moses was transfigured. Stephen was transfigured. Then why not you? Why not I? Is it impossible that the All-Father should say of you or of me, "This is my beloved child in whom I am well pleased"?

All the beauty, physical or spiritual, that we ever achieve, is a reflection from the glorious face of God, and a sure result of our prompt responsiveness to His perfect will.

How did Jesus bear the awful burdens that fell upon him? How did he bring himself to drink that bitter cup? Was not the frightful drama somewhat less a pain to his sensitive heart because these two hero friends, Moses and Elijah, were looking on and taking sympathetic part in this battle? Was not Jesus transfigured by the contemplation of his sublime work for men, its inestimable cost, its mighty and immeasurable meaning?

THE GREATEST IS SERVANT OF ALL

Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be servant of all.—MATT. xx. 27.

Love-work and comradely service is the chief feature in the life of Jesus. Helpfulness is the dominant quality in all his thought. He went about doing good and proclaiming his kingdom as the

exclusive possession of those who ministered to the hungry, the sick, and the poor. He described his discipleship as a yoke. He washed his disciples' feet and enjoined them to do the same service for one another. He said, "I am among you as one that serveth."

That the motive of service is important, Jesus constantly insisted. He said, "Sinners give to sinners to receive as much again." The gift of a farthing for love's sake was a finer thing in his sight than all the lavish expenditures of rich men who gave in a perfunctory way. He immortalized a woman who expended three hundred denarii for love's sake, and gave undying fame to another who paid two mites to the temple service. With Jesus the heart behind the gift was everything. He would have us enhance the value of our service by bestowing it where it is most needed. "I came not to call the righteous," he says; "I came to bind broken hearts, to deliver the captive." Call not thy friends and rich neighbours, but call the poor and needy to thy feasts; they cannot repay thee.

Before any man can greatly serve his fellow-men, he must be strong and free. God has given power without measure to the souls of men, but what avails that power if the soul be fettered in thought and action? No permanent or substantial progress can be made in religion, art, or civilization unless truth is ever progressive in the minds and hearts of the people. The enslavement of mediaeval Europe to ecclesiastical systems and tyrannies vetoed all spiritual progress. Luther, himself freed from the yoke, pointed the way of freedom from the

Church's thrall. He transferred the centre of authority from an infallible Church to an infallible book; the reverent thought of to-day has transferred that centre of authority from the book to Him who is the inspirer of the book. The Church may still speak with lofty contempt of the sects and of those outside the fold, but the discerning pass on, smiling in their strength of service, conscious of a far-reaching freedom.

It is the same with the physical forces. Power is resident in matter by reason of the infinite Unseen within, but the law of physical freedom must be discovered so as to release the physical forces and bring them under the dominion of man. Those who have revealed conditions under which we may use the powers of nature are great, and the race has written their names in gold upon the banners of fame, where all the world must see. Columbus, Gutenberg, Marconi, and a thousand others might be named as among those who have achieved a conspicuous greatness by being the servants of all.

If they are great who have opened the doors of physical law for the enlargement of the life of men in an environment of phenomena, how incomparably greater is he who himself became the door and the way by which every soul may enter and explore the infinite heights and depths of that life that has no boundaries. The heart of man could never have guessed that the way of service and sacrifice is the path that leads to peace, to greatness and to enduring life. Jesus revealed that law and lived its whole meaning and intent, making it a living law for living men.

THE GREATNESS OF HUMILITY

Whosoever shall humble himself as a little child, the same shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

MATT. xviii. 4.

Jesus did not commend to adults the lack of knowledge which characterizes childhood, nor the negative state of virtue in children. He taught that the child in its humility and in its confidence is a model of heavenly citizenship. How often have we, reversing the order of Jesus' words, said to little children, "Except ye be converted and become as adult Christians, ye cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

Humility and faith are the distinguishing qualities that Jesus finds in childhood and commends to us. The secret of humility is idealism. It is the consciousness of the contrast between our practice and our ideal. The child thinks of the strength and resourcefulness of manhood, and hopes to attain to these. These are his ideals. He knows how utterly deficient he is, and is humble.

Thus ideals are ever the prerequisite of humility. We must keep lofty aims and ideals ever before us. They should be higher far than present possible practice. This is sure to result in humility. It will also produce an increasing development of spiritual power. True humility is, indeed, never present in a weak character. Humility is the consciousness that we are living beneath the level of our aspirations, and it always involves an ideal loftier than our practice.

But we should have faith in our ideals. The child never for one moment doubts that he will develop the powers of mature life. Confidence presupposes truthfulness. Childlike faith is not credulity ; it is rather a consciousness that as truth is true, falsehood is out of the question. It is the assurance that God will not deceive, and that man, too, is sincere. The child holds this creed till he is deceived by men ; till, perchance, having suffered many severe disappointments, some of which he cannot charge against man, he naturally, now that he has found man untrue, charges against Heaven ; consequently he regards God as capricious and unkind, and, perhaps, unfair and untrue. Some of the theology of the past has been developed out of such results as these.

Love thinketh no evil, but rejoiceth in the truth. We are too polite in these days to be true. We are too much in the drawing-room to tell out the truth, fair and free under the unblushing skies.

The child is true without endeavour. He does not find the truth inconvenient, uncomfortable or awkward, as older people often do.

All these child-virtues are incompatible in the adult with the keenest intellectual acumen. They are the sure enemies of adroitness and cunning, and lift us above these things, taking the wolf and the fox out of us, and making us kind and true to every living creature.

They who retain the child-virtues of faith, humility and truth, are invariably able and unquestionably great.

The words of Jesus imply that greatness in title

or station or wealth is not essential, not even in relation to the organized Kingdom of God, which we call the Christian Church. More essential is a closeness of touch with Jesus in his faith in God, his consequent hope in man, and his triumph over all that is not true.

THE HERO OF THE COMMON PEOPLE—THE GOSPEL IN JER- USALEM

GOD WORKS ON ALL THE DAYS

My Father worketh^hhitherto, and I work.—JOHN V. 17.

WORK is a divine function. It is also a means of attaining perfection. Practice makes perfect. Conversely, the less we do the worse we do it. Busy people nearly always do their work most thoroughly.

In the narrative from which our quotation is taken, the sanctity of the Sabbath was in question. Jesus had healed the paralytic at the intermittent mineral spring at Bethesda on that day, thus showing that the Sabbath was to be a day of rest, but not a day of indolence. We must have respite from the grind of gears and the whirr of wheels, or we should "burn out," "run down," so Sunday is given as a balance wheel. It keeps us steady in the roads of Eternity, and gives us opportunity to see how restfully God works.

He works on all the days. Every moment his sun shines, his bird-songs blend with "the sound of the church-going bell," the bees swarm the ant

constructs its cell, the rain falls, the grass grows. Silently the mighty equator of the sun keeps to the cosmic line and gives the planets poise. The moon beckons to earth's seas, and the tides march singing up her coasts regardless of all our special sanctities. God's servants never tire in their tasks. They never fail to be on time. By the study of God's methods we learn to work restfully. This is our task, not only on the Sabbath but every day. We should make the law of the Sabbath and every other law of God a part of our equipment, just as the musician makes his instrument a part of his life and work. All the best work is done without hurry and without undue noise. Man must be master of his instrument, so that he can give attention to those inspirations that stir his imagination and move his heart. He must never let his performance discount his capacity.

In nature work is more general than it seems to be, for while all things tend to rest they also tend to action. Even dead matter, so-called, is filled with potential energy, and responds to gravitation, to chemical action, and, when assimilated by living bodies, to vital function.

When the apple falls and rolls into some low place on the ground we say it tends to rest ; when water flows to its lowest level we say the same, but this is only a superficial view. It is a tendency to action and motion that brings these and all things to the lowest possible plane, against which tendency they ever urge and press. They respond to the energy we call gravitation to the fullest possible degree. Matter has to be held together or its tendency to motion will dissipate it in response to

forces physical, chemical, physiological, sociological, temperamental ; and these apparently disintegrating forces are in reality constructive, for they enlist into action for newer and more significant purposes those energies no longer performing usual functions.

We are bewildered by the tricks of time and by our own imperfect vision, and are led to suppose that matter is at rest because, for the moment, it is still ; that there is no physical energy involved because objects are apparently motionless ; that chemistry is not busy because a certain fluid is not boiling in a retort ; that nothing vital is doing because the seed is lying in the granary. And yet we know that nothing is still, that our life is ever moving and we cannot but work.

Jesus declares the secret of working restfully. It is the method of the lowly heart. "Take my yoke." "Learn of me." "I am meek and lowly of heart." "Ye shall find rest unto your souls." Do we work feeling that the triumph of God's kingdom is dear, and to us the glory and beauty of the world is involved in its supremacy ? Do we at the same time rest, feeling that the might and wisdom of Jehovah insures that supremacy ?

Love impels us to work ; faith enables us to rest.

THE KINGLINESS OF KINDNESS

What shall I do to inherit eternal life ?—LUKE x. 25.

Again the all-embracing question, asked this time by a brainy lawyer. And the same answer—the

only answer—is given : “ Love God and thy neighbour.” But the lawyer would be explicit and asked, “ Who is my neighbour ? ” Then came, by way of answer, that graphic story of the wayfarer on the Jericho road, of the highwaymen, the flashing blade, the bleeding wound, and the helpless plight of the traveller. Then the picture of the passing priest and the Levite who would not be bothered, and of the tender-hearted Samaritan who took pity on the helpless, half-dead Jew, dressed his wounds, carried him to an inn, and paid for his attendance till he was better. Then Jesus added those dramatic words which even yet ring in the soul of the race : “ Go thou and do likewise.”

What was lacking in the priest, and what was that in the Samaritan’s heart which has made his memory sublime ?

What prompted that beautiful service but love, which is the very life of God, the essential fibre of His heart ?

Such service has not only its fountain in love, it has its guerdon, too. All life, all nature, is sweeter to the tender heart. The roses that bloom on the Samaritan plain of Sharon could mean little to the priest and Levite, but to the good Samaritan their beauty and fragrance were evidence of God’s sweet everlasting love. Ten thousand eyes might see the sun setting in vermillion fire over the Mediterranean waters, even as now while I write he tips with crimson glory the heights along the Hudson, but only the Spirit of the Good Samaritan could see in all that splendour the symbol of the perfect beauty, the grace and the loveliness of our God.

In the heart of this man of Samaria was cherished the sacred fire of a love so sweet that only its possessor could know its perfect rapture. It impelled him to kindness so that he was not able to be ungenerous.

Jesus' answer to the lawyer was the same essentially as that given to the rich young ruler. The details of its application alone were different. To us also the voice of Jesus comes, "Love God supremely and your neighbour as yourself." The application of the precept, which is the Golden Rule in another form, will vary in particular cases, but in every case we must cherish Love, the essential of all that is divine. The only possible expression of Love is kindness. Love is the answer to every question the human heart can ask. Love is the solution of every problem that can interest the soul of man.

Liebe macht den Himmel
Himmlischer—die Erde
Zu dem Himmelreich.¹

AT JESUS' FEET

(*Feast of Tabernacles, probably Oct. A.D. 29*)

Mary sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.—LUKE x. 39.

This appears to have been the first visit of the Master to the home of Lazarus. The early days of the feast may have been spent there in seclusion, and the incident of the lesson probably occurred at

¹ Schiller's "Hymn to Love."

this time. The sisters, who were famous for their hospitality, were busy with the extraordinary duties of the feast. They had both been attracted by the remarkable personality of Jesus. The subtle power of his great character irradiated their souls. On the other hand, that home had become a haven of sacred rest to the young prophet. Without the memory of some such home our souls are poor indeed.

But while all the family appreciated the friendship of Jesus, and that probably for its own sake, Mary had become conscious of his mighty moral and spiritual stature. She had heard from his lips strains of eternal music and felt the subtle influence of the universal song. She had caught glimpses of the larger meaning of life, its far-stretching vistas of sublime experience. Her vision had pierced its wide open firmament, and her soul spread its wings of faith in the open light and confidently rested on the buoyant atmosphere of spiritual law. She heard his word. His voice turned truth to music. His prose was an anthem vibrating through the farthest recesses of her soul. His deep pervasive tones floated love-laden from regions new to the awakening spirit of this Jewish maiden and filled her with a consciousness of peace and power unutterable and everlasting.

“Dost thou not care?” The words jarred like an unpleasant discord on the music of Mary’s heart. The lisping vine-leaves, fluttering in the borders of the booth where they were sitting, made sweet accompaniment to the voice of Jesus, but now remonstrance and complaint threatened to break

the heavenly spell and drive the Gospel out of Mary's heart.

Jesus did not apologize to Martha either on Mary's behalf or on his own. Some have defended Martha. The things of earth have their uses. True, but they are all secondary uses. Spirit is primary. The body must be fed, but men cannot live by bread alone ; the word of God is better food for the spirit and more necessary to its life. " Only one thing is needful." How we do forget. The busy world admonishes us if we neglect for one hour the strenuous battle for the good things of earth that we may gain the boon of a perfected being. When we observe the substantial and comfortable circumstances of the so-called well-to-do we are too easily led to suppose that having more than others is a duty that we must not neglect. How slow we are to learn that if the will of God rules our lives all these things are ours, and we can summon them at will, or, what is better, can go blithely without them.

Note the method of Jesus. " Martha, Martha ! " He did not hurt Martha. He appealed to her, and doubtless convinced her, for he was devoted to the whole household, so much so that he lived there much of the remainder of his life. When the furious storm burst upon him elsewhere, he found here sweet shelter and loving confidence ; on the other hand, when distress and bereavement came to their home in Bethany, they sent for Jesus, and it is written that " Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus."

Mary of Bethany is probably the strongest, finest, and most beautiful woman of the New Testament, excepting only Mary Magdalene.

Besides the great lesson as to the bread of life and the soul's sustenance, one other lesson may be learned here as to the overwhelming importance of Christian conversation. The illuminating influence of the truth, as presented by a clear-minded and pure-hearted friend to one whose soul is receptive, cannot be over-estimated. How often does the hungry soul cry out for communion with a comrade heart !

MOSES OR JESUS

Now Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned : but what sayest thou ?—JOHN viii. 5.

Moses commanded that the man also should be put to death, but these pretended guardians of the law were valiant only against the weak, hence they arrested the woman.

Would Jesus deny the authority of Moses ? To do so was a crime among the Hebrews, however innocent it may appear to us. On the other hand, would he retreat from the standard of love and grace and compassion which he himself had raised ? It seemed he must do one or the other. He did neither. He rather diverted their attention from the differences between Moses and himself, and centred it upon the hypocrisy in their own natures.

The fact is, the law of Moses was in some respects a brutal one—necessarily so, because of the stern conditions of those pioneer days. The nation was weak. It felt compelled to strike back at the hurtful individual. Even the autocrat may be fitted to

rule an incompetent race, may indeed rule by divine right till, by revolution, it proves its competency to rule itself. To these scribes and Pharisees Jesus seemed not to abrogate the law of Moses. He deprecated all brutal laws by the effective power and beauty of his life and teaching, and such laws are now only a hideous memory of the far-away past.

He stooped down as though he did not hear their questions, but when they continued asking he lifted his flashing eyes and hurled at them defiantly this memorable word, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Then he averted his face so that these guilty hypocrites might the more easily escape from him, in whose sight their presence was a blood-stain.

And every one of them went out attended by his conscience. How wondrously tactful was Jesus! How easily he outwitted the hypocritical cunning of these Pharisees! This guilty woman was in no danger after she came into the presence of Jesus. There is a protective power in virtue that cannot be trifled with. Every strong character has felt it in himself, and all of us have felt it in others. Every soul with authority can quell a mob and arrest the foolish or fatal purpose of the multitude.

This miserable and guilty daughter of humanity now stood alone before Jesus, her soul befogged by sensuality and sin; the sublime vision of purity, the transcendant glory of her life, in total eclipse. She had lost her soul vision, that heavenly beacon which would have guided her through the maze of conflicting emotions and wayward desires. She saw its guiding light no longer.

“Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more.”

Can we doubt that the sweet consciousness of a new-found friend rose like a sun over the horizon of this woman's soul. Surely her heart lingered in the light of his presence who had now become the joy and hope of her life. Sin, which had banished God's sweet angels from her bosom, receded like a black shadow of shame and sorrow, and in its place there appeared in her soul visions of a beautiful, honourable womanhood.

Have not you, have not I, often invoked the law of Moses and dealt crushing blows upon the head of the sinner? Let us learn the Christly way, averting our faces and keeping a graceful silence when scandal thrusts its blight upon our attention. Let us bring love and light and purity to the soul that has lost its way, so that it may once more see the path through the billows and lay hold of the life-helm.

Each of us needs the considerate grace and sympathy of the good: we cannot, therefore, deny it to any soul.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

I am the light of the world.—JOHN viii. 12.

I and the Father are one.—JOHN x. 30.

The truth shall make you free.—JOHN viii. 32.

What truth? Any one of a million facts may make one glad or sad, may elate or depress the heart, but there is only one truth which to know

means inevitable freedom. At this Feast of Tabernacles, the last that Jesus celebrated, he reached the high watermark of truth. Himself standing consciously on the spiritual highlands of experience, he invited his disciples also into the same clear light.

Jesus identified himself with the Father. His spirit was one with the Eternal. It was not a resemblance; it was not an imitation or likeness; it was identity. And yet Jesus says, "My father is greater than I." The identity was only partial in its physical expression. This is reasonable. The eternal and the universal can be represented only partially in a finite form. The identity was spiritual, and in the spiritual realm that identity was complete.

Jesus here taught the law of the Father and child. We are the spiritual children of him whose works we do. We are of the same race with him whose word we obey. We are one with that being, human or divine, with whom our souls harmonize. Obedient to God, we are his children and partake of His life.

How urgently and ardently Jesus persists in showing that every disciple is a child of God with all a child's privileges. He declares that the Kingdom of God is within us. He gave us the basis of Paul's teachings, that these bodies are the sacred shrines of the eternal God, by whose spirit within we are changed by degrees into His image. The method Jesus reveals is that of obedience and fellowship. We must live with God within till it becomes a joy to obey Him and we recognize our spiritual identity with Him even as Jesus did.

Nature teaches us in the same way. She forces independence upon us. Yet it is not independence, but trust in God and His physical laws and our power and fitness, with God's help, to use these laws. How nature does force upon us the tremendous task of living. At first we need props; mother does our pre-natal breathing; we are born and have to do it ourselves. We cannot walk; mother carries us. But nature makes us walk, and run, and talk, and think. We absorb all our props, books, teachers, and all. This is education. The swimmer has become his own life-preserver. We cannot tell another how to do anything. We can only fling him out into the new element where he himself must walk or swim or live or soar. We cannot perish. No eaglet ever failed in his first brush with the atmosphere if only that eaglet used his powers of motion and poise.

It is so with the God-consciousness. When we know our divine identity, when we know that, doing our best with the powers we have, we cannot perish, then we fling ourselves upon the unseen element, we trust the eternal laws and find ourselves borne upon the atmosphere of eternity.

But we must not forget that obedience is the wing of faith. Shall I do this, that I am prompted to do, for another less happily placed than I? Would not my children suffer? It would be good for him. Then trust God. Be sure that if it is good for your brother it is right for you to do it.

In material things we are subject to many laws, of parliament, of society, of taste, of the order of nature; but in the realm of thought and will and

aspiration all is in our power when we are one with God. The light of the world is shining in our souls, and we must look within for its eternal ray. Then we shall be free from teachers, books, churches, rites, traditions, creeds, theologies, free as Jesus, the pioneer who blazed the way through the forest of life for us, and taught us the law of freedom in fellowship with God.

THE PRODIGAL'S FATHER

(Feast of Dedication, probably Dec. 25th, A.D. 29)

This my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost,
and is found.—LUKE xv. 24.

This is the sweetest story in the world, in the sweetest of all books. It has been called the story of "The Prodigal Son," but it is the father around whom the chief interest centres, and it is really the story of the Prodigal's father. Prodigals are too common, even prodigals who go home humble when they cannot longer exist elsewhere, but fathers such as this of the story are rare indeed, and the homes where they preside are colonies of heaven.

Jesus has shown us the Father in many ways, but nowhere has he shown a more perfect picture of God to the hungry heart of humanity than in this story. All the essentials of the Gospel are in it. It is a full equipment for the evangelists. It is all the Scripture we need for the life here and hereafter. The finest historic and legendary stories of the world afford no more beautiful character than

this of that nameless man who, with a sweet kiss of love, welcomed his wandering boy back to his home and to all its pure associations.

The father of the prodigal is the human model of our Father in Heaven. His attitude towards his son is an expression of the heart and mind of God towards those whom sorrow and penitence have forced to seek their native home in the heart and thought of God.

The prodigal wanted money, made silver and gold his confidence, sought strange joys and new sensations ; but when he had wasted his money, and was sick of the world's worry and dissipation, he longed for the simple ways and the quiet dignity of his father.

Only when the human heart keeps close to the heart of God can it develop that large consciousness of a free and comprehensive life, where the whole universe is felt to be the Father's house and we are consciously His heirs, children born of His heart.

I sat at the bedside of a young man soon to be called into the unknown land. He had not lived as he should have done. He had wandered from God and did not feel comfortable in the thought that soon he would appear in God's presence. I told him the story of the prodigal's father ; I assured him that this was Jesus' picture of God's feelings towards us when we forsake and disobey Him, that Jesus knew what he was talking about, that, indeed, no one knew better. I confessed that I knew no better word of consolation for him than this, and assured him that God will receive us after we have wandered away from Him, no matter how

wrong-headed or wrong-hearted we may have been. I explained that God will give us His Spirit to change us into all that we ought to be. This satisfied him, and he believed the story and the word of Jesus, and passed in peace into the silent land.

I could tell of other similar cases, and I have yet to learn if there is any better way than this of leading a soul to God and into a life of service. I believe there is none.

The love of God is, after all, the strongest attraction to the heart of humanity. Jesus has shown us that love. He is thus the word of revelation, the Revealer of God to us, and inasmuch as he has expressed that love in his own life, we are justified in saying that he is God manifested in humanity.

To all prodigals Jesus says :

Return, O wanderer, to thy rest ;
 Thy Father calls for thee ;
 No longer now an exile roam
 In guilt and misery ;
 O return, return !

Nothing better can be said to those who are afraid to meet God. To be at home with the Father is to be conscious of God's presence wherever we may be, to know that God is not only in the still small voice, but that he is also in the lightning and the tempest. The soul that feels that it must throw its arms around the forest and the sky, that it is itself the spirit of the wind and the soul of the sunlight, is at home with God ; but to feel that the clouds are dead and all the stars are afar off, that nature is all outside the soul, and the Unseen has no relation to, or expression in, the seen, is to be

lonely and without God. We know that "the things which are seen were not made of the things which do appear," but that "the invisible things of Him from the foundation of the world are understood by the things that are made."

THE INDIFFERENCE OF THE RICH

There was a certain rich man . . . and there was a certain beggar.—LUKE xvi. 19, 20.

Unquestionably and overwhelmingly, the final argument and practice of Jesus' word and life were a protest against ease, extravagance and luxury, and a complete endorsement of the life of sincerity and simplicity. All his teachings and practice were a commendation of the life of service for love's sake, of comradeship and brotherhood and ministration.

Jesus could consistently say, "Woe unto you rich," for he steadfastly refused to accept any sort of well-being arising out of the distresses of his fellowmen. He knew that such well-being is not well-being, but a life of shame. He would not receive special privileges, but only such blessing as others could have on equal terms with himself.

The rich man's condemnation was not that he was rich, but rather that he allowed his riches to separate him from his needy brother. The vital element in their separation was the pride and selfishness which caused the rich man to think only of himself while his fellow-citizens died of hunger at the gate.

Indifference to the woes of others is a sure road to hell, and may exist in a poor man's heart as well as in the rich, though it is chiefly the danger of the wealthy. This indifference is the most conspicuous vice of the present social order, and each of us merits a share of condemnation on this account. That system of commercialism which has for its slogan "Every man for himself" might have been tolerable in certain stages of development, but it generally involves or implies the added clause, "The devil take the hindmost."

The competitive system induces distresses which the doles of charity, private and public, can never adequately relieve. We must care for the under man in the social order, not by special or spasmodic generosity, but by rebuilding our social system with our brother's interest at heart. We must see that he may live, that every man may live who will do a reasonable amount of service. On the other hand—and just as necessarily and as Christly in spirit—we must see that that man, rich or poor, who is able to serve and will not, shall serve imperatively.

We must return to a simpler life with less of strain and stress. We must be satisfied with plainer, severer, perhaps even ruder and cruder implements of comfort and a more austere method of discipline. We must be more soldier-like in our private life. Indeed soldierly virtues are destined eventually to find their only useful setting there. Living more in the order of nature we shall develop a more robust manhood and a larger claim on our self-respect.

To live closer to nature is not to lower life's standards, but to raise them. By unloading many

of our commercial, social and ecclesiastical burdens we should have leisure for many of the best elements of family life, now almost obsolete. The morning and evening prayer, which was once a chief factor in the making of great men and great nations, is now omitted by force of the complex and imperative commercialism of our times.

Four-fifths of the cost of all distribution could be saved by a social or co-operative system replacing our present unneighbourly methods. The post office is a perpetual condemnation of us who have not further extended the principle of co-operation in our social institutions.

It was a strangely crude artlessness and lack of appreciation of metaphor that led the Church in other days to deduce from this story of the rich man the doctrine of a flaming hell. Jesus was a poet in the most intense meaning of the word. Imagery was his native speech, but he was far too wise to speak or even to think of combustion as being a possible torment to a spiritual body.

There was no possibility of the rich man being happy in Abraham's bosom. He had made gold his confidence so long that he had lost his finer spiritual sentiments. He was not dissatisfied with himself, but only with his lot. He was not penitent, which may have been the great gulf.

This lesson is one which primarily condemns indifference to the needy. Jesus states principles which are significant, and we know that luxury, wealth and ease, more than any other conditions, have destroyed men and nations. On the other hand, poverty is not only a great evil, but its exist-

ence in a land of plenty is a fearful condemnation of those who are indifferent to its prevalence.

GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER

He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.—LUKE xviii. 9.

There is large room for diversity of opinion as to what constitutes exact justice, and as to what is righteousness or extortionate. The Law of Love never demands exact justice. It always demands more or less than mathematical righteousness. It demands far more of ourselves, far less of others. The highest, divinest types of life do not ask measure for measure but give unfailingly and unceasingly, asking nothing in return.

The immortal publican must have caught some glimpse of this diviner justice, this law of the life of love, when he smote upon his breast, his severe self-condemnation impelling him to cry out for mercy. He saw how far his life had fallen short of that divine law of love by which he was thus convicted.

The Pharisee set up his own standards and lived up to his own ideals, but failed to see the sweet splendours of the love-light that set the publican's heart afire with longing to be a better, purer and more unselfish man, because of the love that he had for God and his fellowmen. The Pharisee was doing the works of the law abstractly, it being his conviction that this was his duty; the publican had fallen in love with God and humanity, and saw his

selfish motives as hideous leprosy, which in comparison with the beauty of self-sacrifice for others was a life woefully base and contemptible.

The Pharisee, regarding himself complacently and with self-admiration, came to God recounting his own excellences, and, being righteous in his own sight, was not justified in the sight of God. The publican came to God conscious of his own deficiencies, and, appealing to Him, went away justified.

There was a difference wide as eternity between these two. One thought himself perfect; the other knew himself to be base. One thought himself admirable before angels and men; the other was ashamed to be alive. Yet the latter was approved of Jesus. Could we be sure in such a case which was the better man? How can we tell? One thing is certain, the man who despises his fellowman, and is persuaded that he is the cream rising to the top of humanity, who scolds and blames and grumbles, is himself base and despicable.

The eternal life is a life of obedience to heavenly ideals, for these are the divine voice and the heavenly light in the human heart.

MISSION TO THE LOST

The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.—MATT. xviii. 11.

Jesus had now come to a realization of the full meaning and scope of his mission. He had discovered the universal basis of God's Kingdom in the

love which reigned in his own heart, and knew that this divine principle is the law by which God rules.

The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost. This is the text of those inimitable stories of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son, with which Luke, in such vivid style and with so beautiful a colouring, enriches his fifteenth chapter.

The natural setting is the conversation on occasions of stumbling, or offences which cause the soul to leave the pastures of God, to forsake its home in God's heart and lose its heavenly way. The wilderness in which most modern sheep are lost is that of selfish desire for fortune or fame, or the absorption in the merely material interests of earth, thus abolishing the serener life of the soul in the realm of its high ideals, where life is free and glad, where the soul is in its true home and the spiritual powers find free ingress to the life, making it strong and supreme.

But Jesus does not dwell upon these matters; he shows God's way with the erring soul that has lost the joy of His presence.

The story of the Lost Sheep is rather the story of the Good Shepherd; that of the Prodigal is the story of the Father's welcome to his erring child upon his return. All the theology we need for bringing sinners into the Kingdom of God is contained in the stories of the Prodigal Son and the Lost Sheep.

In this story of the Lost Sheep, how beautifully Jesus shows the unfailing tenderness of God's heart. The shepherd leaves the ninety-nine grazing on the

green everglades and goes into the mountains. "Doth he not leave the ninety and nine and go into the mountains?"

How unanswerably this is put, and how God's highest attributes are here found in a sensible, faithful and humble shepherd. In the teeth of the tempest he seeks the stray lamb till he finds it lost and lacerated among the rocks. He presses it to his bosom and turns his face to the fold. That face of infinite beauty and power, shining down the years, tells the ages in their flight that God is love. Jesus identifies himself with the shepherd. He identifies us with the shepherd. He identifies God with the shepherd. Jesus here shows us the heart and mind of God. He shows us also God's method, and we know he wants us to adopt it.

God's attitude towards the erring must be ours also if we would be the children of God. In no other spirit can we hope to save the lost. This spirit grows by use, and love comes of loving service. But we scold, discipline, imprison or execute.

Shall we not be ashamed of our lack of service to the great and loving God when we know Him better? How we have failed to be like Jesus. How far off we follow him. How unlike God our Father we are. Our lives shall take on new features of love and service from the contemplation of the splendours of the character of Jesus. Heaven is where love is. Where love is not is hell.

Life is worth living only when we love one another.

DIVORCE

Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause ?—MATT. xix. 3.

The form of this question indicates the dependent state of women, even among the Hebrews, in the first century. Motherhood has since been exalted and woman raised to her present estate chiefly through the influence and teachings of Jesus.

Every question as to human relations sets the expedients of time in vivid contrast with the eternal realities. Present conveniences and immediate personal comforts are often more or less opposed to the cosmic harmonies and to our eternal interests.

The question therefore arises, shall we do the easiest thing now ; shall we, like the brutes, follow the line of least resistance, or shall we nail our creature comforts to the cross, and, marching on with soldierly step, keep to God's eternal way ?

Jesus was the supreme idealist. He saw this question of the Pharisee in the light of the Kingdom of God, that light which enlightens every man that comes into the world. He said, "A man shall cleave to his wife, shall be to her a tower of strength, a comrade in life's arduous battle." He commended the ideal way.

The Pharisee said it was better in that case for a man not to marry. They thought the way of Jesus was impracticable. We, too, are too ready to regard idealism as impracticable. We measure its quiet ways against the complexities of modern life and think it out of the question. But idealism

refuses to carry unnecessary burdens on its shoulders, and the best thing it can do for its votaries is to lead them into the simpler and humbler ways of God.

Idealism is stronger than we have thought. The strongest forces are the quiet ones. A low voice is more expressive than a loud one. Sweetness and light will always win in the long race with noise and bluster. The most significant powers in all the universe are, like gravitation, absolutely silent.

We carry the instinct of self-preservation to the point of an incredible trust in physical means to fortify our hearts and make us happy, forgetting that our sources of strength and peace are all within; forgetting that no physical or special relation, new or old, can bring permanent peace to a soul that has not been made free by coming into harmony with itself and its environments, by becoming a son instead of a slave in the house of its Father.

There is in the ideal life no condition that could justify divorce or jails or scaffolds. We must heal the constitution of society by the application of those remedies which will enlighten its mind, sweeten its spirit, strengthen its moral fibre, and bring its life-tones into harmony with the universal song. Such remedies are not inflicted. They are not punitive. They do not waken hate or resentment. Love will at length abolish divorce by removing the inharmony which suggests it. Every human relation shall then be a divine harmony.

There is always the expedient as opposed to the ideal course. To be a cautious, self-regarding

person, seeking comfort, convenience and earthly good, regardless of the estate of others, is expedient as seen by the short-sighted materialistic vision of earth. To act always in the light that falls from higher sources, to see things with the larger and wider vision, is the way of the illumined spirit.

The marriage relation falls into the same category as every other human bond. When we consent to divorce we step down from the ideal to the expedient because of hardness of heart, we fall from the Christian to the Jewish standard, we forsake Jesus for Moses.

COST OF THE NEW LIFE

What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life ?—MATT. xix. 16.

When Simon the Sorcerer wished to purchase with money the apostolic power, Peter said, "Take thy money to perdition with thee." Money cannot purchase any spiritual gift ; it is not a measure of value in the life of love. The favour of God cannot be bought. If it is untrue and abominable to say that "every man has his price," how blasphemous is the statement that God has His price. No one, not even Jesus, by his death on the Cross, can purchase God's favour for another. There is only one way by which God's life, the life eternal, can be ours, and that is by our observing the law and method of that life. When we co-operate with God, He will share with us all the graces of His heart.

178 THE SOVEREIGNTY OF CHARACTER

Eternal life is not ours because of any performance, however praiseworthy. Neither the deeds of the law, the rites of the church, not any special works of righteousness can give God's peace to the soul. Many rely upon theories and offer them as means of salvation, stating them as doctrines, but the careful student of the life of Christ knows that one who loves Jesus is safer without theories than with them. Even getting into some occult relation with the church, the creed, or the cross, each of which, by some cult or other, is credited with saving virtue, cannot avail. Our life-purposes must be in right relation with the Spirit of all Good if we would establish our souls in God's Kingdom.

But it was not entry into the Kingdom that the young ruler desired. He already had a place in that Kingdom, having observed the will of God from his youth. He was longing for a more perfect life, and Jesus loved him for his noble purpose. He seems, however, to have hoped that some short cut to perfection might be named, that by signal gift or service he might have more abundant life.

But there is no royal road to life. The ruler must walk in the same path with the other disciples. If he would live perfectly he must have a perfect life as an example and inspiration, he must have a perfect master as a guide and counsellor—in a word, he must follow Jesus.

“Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor and come, follow me.” This was enjoined, in all probability, not because wealth was a sin in his case, but because the care of wealth would prevent him from following Jesus, as he was literally called to do.

He must walk in the dusty roads with the publican and the fisherman. He must be a peasant among his peasant companions. Every hindrance must be laid aside, so that he may go to the school of Jesus.

Did the young ruler act according to the advice of the Master? We do not know, but we do know that his future peace depended on his course. When the ineffable vision of a perfect life comes into the soul, there is no abiding peace except in following that vision and seeking to realize it.

Of all revolutionists Jesus was the boldest, yet he was also the sanest. His courage was never self-regarding. His sanity was born of his clear spiritual perceptiveness. He knew the unspeakable uplift which comes of casting away all earthly props, trusting one's self to spirit wings and finding that the soul is not overwhelmed, but borne aloft through God's blue sky-deeps. He knew the exaltation as of the swimmer when he first finds that water will float and not drown him, as he had feared.

It was to such an experience that the rich young ruler was called, and he gained immeasurably by the call, even apart from the nature of his response. He had surely caught some vague glimpse of the beautiful land of the perfect life and its contemplation henceforth was to him either an intense joy or, at the worst, a sweetly solemn and regretful memory. He had seen the vision; did he not henceforth often see it? We do not know. In a short time the final opportunity to follow Jesus in the ways of Galilee was past. But he might still walk in that way which grows brighter and fairer as it rises into more difficult heights, a way that is full of joy and

peace, notwithstanding the cross which stands lonely on its cloud-wreathed hills.

Who was this young ruler? I do not know, but I do know that I am he, and in all probability you are he. We are called to follow in the way of the cross, to adjust our affairs to the path of discipleship. This may not mean that we must sell out, but depend upon it, if we will to be perfect it means some difficult task, it means strong-winged progress and sweet communion with the Good Spirit and with all good spirits. But it brings us to the cross by steep paths. It brings pain and grief and the sense of loss at times, but it enables the soul to keep step with God's armies, and yet to feel the sweet hush of His infinite peace. He who listens to the spirit voice shall hear music that no earth song can imitate, and that music shall call him to rule new realms of life. It will bid him rise with a bold sense of universal freedom, however difficult the way. His pulse shall beat with the systole of God's heart. "What lack I yet?"

REWARDS

We have left all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?—MATT. xix. 27.

Peter's question, though rude, was natural and just, however wrong-headed the questioner may have been. The citizens of earth, for the services of earth, seek an earthly reward, but the citizens of heaven find a holy joy in their heavenly love-work which is greater than any other reward.

Peter's investment of his all in the fortunes of the Kingdom sometimes seemed to him as lost. When his sight was clearer, however, he was rich, having nothing, for even so he possessed all things.

"He shall have an hundredfold more in the present time." This is true only in a spiritual sense, and no doubt it was thus Jesus intended it to be understood.

In the somewhat broken report of this conversation left us by the evangelists the difficulties vanish when we find the words of Jesus to be eternally true, when we find that all is ours in Christ. Love is rich in any circumstance. Peter and the Zebedees gave up a daily income of a few denarii, but they gained a teacher whose wisdom compassed all the realms of life, and whose comradeship was a constant assurance of the highest well-being.

All the joy and sweetness of life is the possession of the good. All the powers of life conspire with the Heavenly Father to bless and keep the soul that walks in the eternal ways and observes the ever-guiding law. He who gives his best personal powers and energies to accomplish the will of God is safe though the heavens fall. His heart may well be calm amidst the wrecks of time and the ruin of private fortunes, not excepting his own; all of which is unbelievable unless we see with the clear far vision of God, unless we see the light unseen and hear the music of the truth, the song of love and light and service.

But how shall I, a worker in country or in city, amid my own peculiar cares and toils and sorrows, realize that I have gained by walking in the steep

and narrow way that leads me upward to life, when the broad course is so easy and at times so pleasant ?

This is a question which repeats itself at times to all. Its only sufficient answer is the assurance that the divine love will bring the true and patient heart, sooner or later, by ways of joy, or else through trial and tragedy, but nevertheless unfailingly, to victory and peace. It was so with Peter and his comrades ; it will be so with us.

Meanwhile, a thousand portals welcome us to the light and joy within ; a thousand hearts give us their tenderest love ; God's angels of beauty are our guests ; the best thought of the ages is available to us, and all heavenly hearts inspire to noble living, and fill us, when thus we live, with a subtle, silent gladness. Not only do all landscapes charm and thrill us with their beauty, but we hold a firmer and more possessive interest in this world than do those who have locked its deeds and titles in their vaults, and who exploit the people and their toil.

"And in the age to come, eternal life." Aye, and in the present age, eternal life, else we should not have a hundredfold more in this present time, for it is by virtue of the eternal life that we are truly masters of the world, and its real proprietors and chiefs.

To be is greater than to have, and virtue is its own reward.

A CUP OF COLD WATER

Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me.—*MATT. xxv. 40.*

In the teaching of Jesus there is always in evidence his struggle with the inadequacy of speech. His life was, after all, his most facile and accurate word to men. Language is never clearer than when the speaker's life illumines it. Words in themselves crude and circumstantial become lustrous when the glint and glow of a human life-fire sparkles within them. Sometimes the heart-glow is better language than speech, as when my child comes across the room and kisses me in response to the love-light in my eyes rather than to the speech upon my lips.

Have you ever thrown your soul wide open by merely lifting the eyelids and looking absolutely true? Far oftener we open the merest chink in the door of our personality and, peering through, call out, "Who's there?" Diogenes-like, we live in a tub, but without his lamp, for we never reveal ourselves, but peep through the bunghole of partial knowledge and prejudice. Thus we fail to see the wide landscape and the sky. The larger life is never seen, but only scraps of events and circumstances devoid of their living causes. We shut ourselves in tightly and bolt the door, as if our fellowmen were all burglars and assassins.

With Jesus it was not so. In every sincere fellow-man to some extent he discovered his own soul. He identified himself with every honest heart of humanity. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of

the least of these . . . ye did it unto me.” “ If ye withheld it from the least of these, ye withheld it from me.” “ Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? ” Jesus is poor and weary and hungry and homeless in this city to-day. He is in our hospitals. He is in our prisons. He said so. Turn with open heart to the man or woman who now sits at your elbow ; you shall see Jesus ; you shall find eternal life.

Have you seen him thus ? Then you know the meaning of the 'life eternal, the life that endures, the age-long life, the life without boundaries. Eternal life is not a *quid pro quo*. It is not an honorarium, a retiring allowance, a superannuation fund. We do not inherit a palace in skyland because we pay the price here in services to the unfortunate. Do you think heaven is the reward of virtue only ? There is a heaven the result of good living. I can prove it in a dozen syllogisms, formulas, texts, analogies, and what not, but I pass over all these ; I know them well, but I ignore them all, for heaven is more than reward. It is more than rest and safety. It is Love and all that Love means. When you love the unfortunate one you identify yourself with him, and soon he shall be no more unfortunate. He shall grow rich in love and light and grace. His beauty shall increase till at length he shall be himself to the full, for when we see him in this loving, Christly way, God shall see him, and, through our lives, bring him to see God, which is heaven, for it is love and life abounding.

“ When saw we thee hungry and fed thee ? ” The selfish one who contemplates his own superiority

with affectionate self-regard is a most unlovable mortal. On the other hand, he who admires the strong, sweet qualities in other lives is all that he admires and becomes all that he delights in. Ever we establish ourselves in those courses which we affect. When our vision pierces to the deep sources of eternal beauty ; when we get even the slightest hint of its meaning centred in our souls, then the sky becomes higher and bluer, the clouds are edged with a deeper sun-fringe, the fields are greener, the breeze fresher, and God comes nearer and nearer till He is the very centre of our life. Then the world's life is our life, for our life is enlarged, and we realize that while one human soul is in distress we are distressed, for God cares, and His pity is in our hearts.

When we see as we are seen of God, when we know as God knows us, and apprehend as we are apprehended of Christ Jesus, we find in the hopeless one all divine possibilities, the sweep of eternal developments, the inconceivable range of archangelic powers. Then speech gives place to silence, for we have no words.

JESUS AND THE COMMON PEOPLE

The common people heard him gladly.—MATT. xii. 37.

Jesus identified himself with the common people in their simple joys, and shared the crude austerities of their humble lot. He was interested in all their concerns, and with sincere affection regarded himself as their friend.

The circumstances of his lowly birth seem to have been reflected in his life and teachings, for sincerity and simplicity marked his whole career. His ideals were characterized by kindness of purpose, directness of method, lowliness of heart, and a natural adaptation of all social, national and religious functions to their divine ends in the well-being of man. He repudiated all burdensome ceremonies, denied the obligation to wash clean hands, to honour wicked kings, or to keep any law the observance of which would be disastrous to human welfare. He urged a simple confidence in God as a wise and tender-hearted father, caring for His children, numbering the hairs of their heads, hearing their sighs, seeing their tears and sympathizing with their aching hearts.

He insisted on no complex theories regarding his own birth or nature or death, or as to his miracles, his resurrection, or his ascension. He claimed only that he was sent from God to preach glad news to the poor, to bind their broken hearts and give a richer life to men. To this end he demanded of the people the acceptance of those ideals of truth and goodness which they found in their own better natures, and which he brought to light by a wonderful series of illustrative stories, revealing to them the law of righteousness written in their own hearts. He appealed to their own conscience and reason, recognizing no authority as superior to the word of the spirit revealed in their own judgment, no dictum as superseding their own final sense of right and wrong when these were attested by the common experience of the race.

Thus he made his religion universal in application, not by virtue of his word of authority, but by putting the race in touch with God and charging them with the custody of a new life, under the law of love and sacrifice.

This new religion he thrust out into the arena of life to win its way by those processes of divine evolution by which the seed becomes a tree and all good things increase. The faith and practice of Jesus are acceptable to all men of whatever colour, race or traditions.

The common people will always listen gladly to common sense. It is strange that common sense is so unusual. Cant and sophistry are so rife that we are befogged by what Carlyle, with more force than delicacy, described as "the truth smeared over with despicable and damnable palaver." The mental atmosphere is so murky with sophistical theories that when we hear some scrap of unmitigated common sense we regard it as unquestionably a work of the rarest genius. Jesus always spoke common sense. He never denied the nature of things. He sometimes transcended the known laws of nature, but never said stupid things or did useless or unpractical works. The common people have loved Jesus in all ages. They will accept him when he is presented fairly to their vision. They always love him when they know him. Alas that he is so often unfairly presented.

God help us to live in the spirit of Jesus before men, that they may love the image of his life in us. May we reveal the Saviour of men so that his followers may multiply till this earth becomes a

heavenly kingdom where Christly virtues abound and society is filled with services of love and thrilled with harmonies of peace.

I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

I am the resurrection and the life.—JOHN xi. 25.

More conspicuous than miracle, more vital than life itself, and more significant than death, was the mighty faith and spiritual power of this unique hero of the ages, who could stand in the presence of death and utter this stupendous statement.

“The Master is come and calleth for thee.” Jesus yearned for the profoundly calm but comprehensive faith with which Mary comforted his mighty spirit in this hour of his most critical achievement; for whatever may be said of the raising of Lazarus, there is no doubt that here faith in Jesus rose to its highest point.

“He groaned in spirit and was greatly troubled.”

Doubtless Jesus felt it necessary, as he saw the end of his earthly career approaching, to convince the people that he spoke with the absolute authority of Heaven. What would his revelation of God mean to those unphilosophical Jews if they did not believe that he came from God? Every vision of goodness must, in the very nature of the case, be true; but these humble peasants did not know this. He must give them some convincing sign, some crowning testimony to the authority of his revelation, otherwise his mission would be a failure and

his beautiful message to the world concerning God would be scouted. Unless some conclusive demonstration of his superior knowledge of spiritual law were forthcoming, the Jews would certainly think they knew better than Jesus.

“Jesus wept.” The intense humanism of Jesus is nowhere more clearly evinced than in the deep emotion he displayed on his meeting with Mary. Like two electric currents that join their forces by sudden contact, the divine sentiments of love and sorrow were united in the soul of Jesus when he beheld the tearful eyes of Mary, whom he so tenderly loved.

Emotion to the point of weeping is a disturbance of the serenity and poise of the soul's expression, and yet it is not out of harmony with that strength and sweetness which great natures so deeply and so truly manifest. To weep is human ; it is manly ; it is divine. We would not love a God who could not weep. The Infinite must be large enough to include all that is finite, else the latter cannot know, or love, or commune with the Infinite. Jesus manifested here a divine absence of self-control, which is at once beautifully human and yet perfectly Godlike.

“Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.”

Universal love is a fine ideal, yet when it was most fully realized in the soul of Jesus himself, there were whole worlds of difference between his love for these friends in Bethany and the love which he had for those whited sepulchres who conspired against his life in Jerusalem.

Love is a philosophy and a practice, as well as a sentiment. Both the practice and philosophy of love should be universal. The sentiment of love, in so far as it is in harmony with a true philosophy, is also universal. The intensity of the sentiment, and therefore its present value, depends upon the degree of harmony which exists between the lover and the object loved. The soul calls to itself in some other soul and finds a true response, for we are never absent from those we truly love. The soul is as vulnerable in the person of the loved one as in its own being. Thus love is the identification of oneself with love's object. We are all divine by virtue of God's image in us all. Realizing this, we cannot but love one another. It is only in so far as we fail to realize the divine likeness in us that we fail to love one another. Where the divine image is least realized there is least love.

We do not know by what eternal law Jesus touched the fountains of life and brought faith to the observing Jews and joy to that Christly home. It was an achievement of spiritual knowledge quite as much as it was an accomplishment of infinite power. We fall far short of such power. We can commune with the Infinite, a fact that shows that our spirits are essentially divine. We are one with God, but we have not yet obtained our full heritage of light and power. We differ from Jesus in that he had higher and fuller inspirations than we, and in this also, that he promptly obeyed the inspiration. We are blunt in our spiritual perceptions and have not practised enough the nicer interpretation of the Spirit's voice within our souls. He was fully under

the Divine will. May it not be, is it not true, that all the perfections and powers of the Divine are latent also in us, and waiting only to find a fuller manifestation in a higher development of life and being? One thing is sure; we shall accomplish and shall realize all that is in us by living our lives straight out from God. By perfect obedience to His word within our hearts, we shall make our lives His living word.

Lazarus is reported as having come back from the state of death. Without discussing all that this may mean, it is interesting to enquire whether he had been self-conscious while his body was defunct. When he returned to common consciousness, had he memory of the experiences of the interval of physical rest? The human mind will always interrogate such themes with avid interest. Probably Lazarus did not remember. The bridge between the other life and this may not be one of memory so much as one of simple consciousness, or it may be, in the case of a more highly developed soul, one of higher consciousness, so that the recital of the experiences of such an interval would be quite impossible. The language of the intellect is not that of the spirit. Spiritual experiences are not matters for common recital. "Eye hath not seen nor hath the ear heard them, but God hath revealed them to the loving heart." The land of light and love, the silent land, has an atmosphere so buoyant, it lifts the spirit to eternal heights whose ecstasies are not currently acknowledged in the world of affairs. The soul cannot tell of them, however it may try.

THE FINAL WEEK

(Probably April 1st to 7th, A.D. 30)

BORN BLIND

(Probably Friday)

He saw a man blind from his birth.—JOHN ix. 1.

THE full meaning of the phrase “blind from his birth” has probably never been realized by any but those born blind and who have afterwards received their sight. This man had never seen the least vestige of all the visible universe. He was familiar with all the annoyances so common to the blind, of which others never know, and in many cases never hear. A thousand people had shouted to him at various times, absurdly supposing that because he was blind, he must also be deaf.

The works of men were to him, so far as their appearance was concerned, all ideal. The towers, temples and cities which mark the line of man’s highest physical achievement were to him only the names of concepts emanating from the thick darkness. All those exquisite pictures which God paints for us upon the canvas of nature were a perfect blank to him. The bird poised delicately

with widespread wings upon the lofty air ; the far sweep of the fresh and green-gowned forest ; the western waves crimsoned with sunset fire ; the snow-wreaths that crown with white glory the everlasting hills ; the cloud-bastions which lie against the blue beyond the mountains ; those wondergleams of the Infinite which we have named the stars—all these were to him mere words without music, while to those who see, they are music without words.

“ Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind ? ” The disciples wanted to engage in philosophical discussion. But Jesus stated the basis of all philosophy and set a line from which when philosophers depart they are undone. “ God has sent this man and all men, myself included, to do His will and manifest His works in the light, ere the darkness comes.”

How we have separated ourselves from Jesus. Because he spoke of his work we have forgotten our own. Jesus was the light of the world, so we ignore the fact that we, too, are to be lights in the world, and are to manifest the life of God. Every life should be a divine manifestation, every birth the beginning of a new adaptation of the world to divine uses.

The theory of reincarnation and the doctrine of Karma is involved in the question of the disciples. Jesus is the apostle of the present. If Jesus seemed to support the theory of reincarnation when he said that John was Elijah, he seems as truly to discredit prenatal responsibility in accordance with the doctrine of Karma when he said, “ This man’s sin

did not cause his blindness." Jesus seldom laid much stress on the past or the future. Sometimes he spoke as from the future, and laid all stress upon the past, but by that past he meant the everlasting now, the eternal present, when all life's burdens must be carried and all God's work must be done. The past with its futilities and the future with its anxieties are the burden of unpractical minds.

Jesus opened this man's eyes upon the Sabbath, showing again that the Light is greater than the day and a man is greater than any institution. He symbolized once more the fact that he was the light of the world.

This man was true to Jesus. Thus began his martyrdom. They expelled him from the church. But Jesus sought him and henceforth a light greater than the sunlight flooded his soul. The Light that creates the light now filled his consciousness with its essential ray.

Days—weeks—months passed. On came the storm, gathering strength and fury. At length came the awful night and the still more terrible day of the cross ; then quickly followed the resurrection, the ascension, and Pentecost. All these the blind man saw within eight months after he saw Jesus. Thinking afterwards of the splendid power bestowed on him by his divinely gifted friend, and of all the indignities, cruelties and sorrows that friend had suffered in the brief space of time since they first had met, his heart must have been the arena of conflicting emotions, of pain and grief, because of the tempest of trouble and sorrow to his benefactor, of joy and gratitude because of the privilege of

sight, and, still more, because of the music of love now singing in his heart.

This man dared to take his stand with Jesus when he was unpopular, and as a result, while his eyes danced with the new-found light of nature, his soul was filled with the Light of Eternity. Such moral heroism is needed now. It will do more for the establishment of character than all the creeds, rituals and other devices invented by man. We must stand by our convictions till we have obliterated all the meaningless forms and conventionalisms strewn along the path of the seeker after truth.

We must free the truth or the truth will not make us free.

THE CRUSE OF NARD

(Saturday)

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus.—JOHN xii. 3.

Love and sorrow are at once the strongest and sweetest sentiments that can sway the human heart.

Mary did not foresee all that flood of evils which was threatening her great Teacher and Friend, yet she felt, however vaguely, that this was the time to show him, by unmistakable evidence, that one loving heart was entirely true, and would be with him to share every toil and affliction no less than every joy.

Martha and Lazarus were also grateful. No wonder. Who could fail to recognize such unparalleled manifestation of love and power on their

behalf. The people of Bethany made a feast, thus showing their gratitude for a service which must have waked their wonder as well as their joy and satisfaction. But Mary would show a more personal appreciation in a way which would express her allegiance to Jesus' person and mission. She would identify herself with him and his cause. The costly nature of her gift, its delicacy and intangibility, the evanescence of its material elements, and the very high value of its more subtle qualities, all combined to make the alabaster box of spikenard a most appropriate emblem of love and loyalty, and an assurance of her sympathy with those high purposes which so thoroughly directed his life and dominated his noble heart.

Jesus received Mary's tribute in no common way. No greater honour can be done to any man than to accept both himself and his cause at his own valuation. Judas rebuked her. "This nard might have brought in the market 300 denarii for the benefit of the poor." But Mary had converted the money into a means by which she might give a crowning testimony to her constancy, love and loyalty to Jesus. Jesus was no exquisite: he could live without perfumes, yet doubtless his soul responded with a deeper satisfaction to this convention-defying deed of Mary's than to all the finely-phrased eulogies and profuse honours of that village feast. With Jesus, love and true loyalty were ever the final measures of values. Nature was nothing to him if eternal Love ruled not at its eager heart with solemn joy and constancy. The uplift of the billows, whether on sea or sky, was to him the

heaving bosom of a loving Father. The whole heavens were not spacious enough to be a fitting emblem of the wideness and depth and height of that Love whose method is sacrifice and whose garment is eternity.

Love is the perennial test of humanity. It is also the measure of divinity. Without love life loses its charm, its purpose and its significance. Without love art is but sham, youth and beauty a snare, literature an exhausted lode, oratory and music a hoarse and empty noise. All the splendours of genius are a hollow show if love be not pulsing warm and sweet at the great eternal heart.

Soon the feast was over, and the morning came and the evening. Six short days sped, and the Roman legionaries with iron nails fastened those feet, which Mary's love had anointed, to a wooden cross. The scene was black indeed and midnight reigned, but one great sunbeam pierced the awful sorrow that reigned in Mary's storm-swept soul: it was the thought that she had told him in time—told him that her faith in him was boundless, her love for him unspeakable.

A tradition of the olden time says that Mary of Bethany, persecuted on account of her allegiance to Christ, was forced to leave Palestine, that she fled to Provence, where now her sacred dust lies mingled with that of the Earth-Mother.

Of this I know not, but her spirit is one with the best spirits of all the ages, for she loved Jesus, the Son of Man.

KINGLINESS OF THE LOWLY

(Sunday)

Behold, thy King cometh, meek and lowly.—JOHN xii. 15.

By his conspicuous entry into Jerusalem on this first Palm Sunday morning, Jesus published his presence at the Passover, and gave his disciples a striking lesson in humility. This has been called the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It was far from being a triumph in the Roman sense of that word. All the more on that account was it a genuine triumph of noble character and courage.

Jesus knew that the rulers sought to take his life, nevertheless he appeared openly at the Passover. Every noble soul feels safest in the open. Faith in the universe in large measure is a sure sign of greatness of spirit. Experience teaches that the most secure panoply is a fearless heart.

Jesus knew the way of great conquerors and that he was the greatest of them all. Modesty is not ignorance of one's worth, but rather the recognition of its source. In the face of the grim conviction that forced itself upon him more and more, that he was soon to be put to death, he would show his disciples that a king should be lowly of heart, and in doing so would fulfil a notably difficult passage of Scripture, "Behold, thy King cometh, meek and lowly," etc.

The journey was arranged, and Jesus, Zion's King, came out of Bethany riding on the foal of an ass, passed on through Bethphage down the slopes of Olivet into the valley of the Kedron, and, passing

over its tiny stream near Gethsemane, arrived at the steep of Moriah.

The people interpreted his act as an acceptance of the Kingdom of Zion, and with loyal hosannas spread their tunics on the pathway where the ass's feet should tread, and cut leaf-clusters from the palms and olives to carpet the highway of the King. Most of this loyalty was probably technical and official. It was of a "The King is dead : long live the King !" sort. Five days later, doubtless, many of these joined the murderous mob who shouted, "Crucify him !"

There is, even to-day, a real danger of placing Jesus on the official throne of the intellect while the heart glows no warmer at his name. There is a real danger of our acknowledging his divine claim to kingship and, placing the traditional halo around his head, believing that he is the official Saviour of the world, and that by virtue of our definite acceptance of his offices on our behalf he is our personal Saviour ; and yet we may, by this truly selfish and dry-as-dust theory, miss all the sweetness and beauty of his life, all the strength and glory of his character. My salvation may be nothing but emancipation from fear through faith in a syllogism, mere reliance upon the effect of a divine technique. Is Jesus mine with all his love and life and character ? Have I appreciated his glad tidings of God's fatherly purpose, and are the friendship and comradeship of Jesus the joy and strength of my life ? Yes ? Then he is indeed my King and my Saviour.

Jesus shows us in this incident that the loftiest kingliness is best illustrated by simplicity and

lowliness. The mightiest movements of the ages originate in those quiet forces which, sometimes in the daylight, but oftener in obscurity, press their quiet, eager way into the life of the world till they become at length the body of essential history.

We are reminded here also that the highest authority, the greatest honour, the most effective dignity, is that of love and service.

THE SACRED TEMPLE

(Monday)

It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer.

MATT. xxi. 13.

Jesus entered the temple on that morning of the hosannas, looked upon all things therein, heard the ringing coin, the clamour of the money-changers and traders, the lowing of the oxen, the bleating of the sheep, saw the courts of the Lord's house crowded with citizens from every land ; he noted the dismay on their faces at the extortionate rates of exchange and the exorbitant prices of the temple offerings. Here, in the immediate vicinity of the shekinah, were filthy stalls of sheep and oxen. The whole scene of wild disorder, reeking with injustice, warranted its characterization as a "den of thieves."

After a night in Bethany he returned to rid the court of the Gentiles of this disgraceful mêlée.

Although Jesus was of all men least subject to institutional authority, and though in him nature never apologized to art, yet he had a fine regard for

the fitness of things and never tolerated irreverence, but observed religiously all sacred associations and divine relations.

The sacred courts of the temple were the scene of God's most frequent manifestations to Israel. Here the voice of eternity had spoken ; within the veil a luminous cloud floated over the mercy seat, denoting to Israel the presence of Jehovah.

Jesus, not being of the tribe of Levi, was not permitted to enter the court of the priests, nevertheless he felt that the place was pervaded with a divine quality which the confusion of a market would most surely dissipate. The law permitting the sale of these things in the vicinity of the temple could not vindicate the extortion, outrage and clamour which he witnessed.

Jesus did not license the desecration of any other of God's habitations by his special effort to maintain the sanctity of the temple. The whole earth is full of His majesty. He is not truly worshipped, either in Jerusalem or in Gerizim, but in spirit and in truth. The place is sacred, only because of its associations with the spirit, which is the seat of authority and judgment. All places where the spirit's life and power are manifested are holy, but especially those which are hallowed by the vision of God and by the enlarging life of the soul.

Is it too much to hope that all industry and art and commerce and politics shall some day be regarded as holy and a part of that fraternal co-operative organization for which many pray, a fellowship both human and divine ?

The physical and finite are growing comparatively

less important in the developing consciousness of humanity. The temple court is merging into the eternal city in which no temple is. We are beginning to feel that every room and corridor in the house of life is a court in the sacred temple of our God.

Yet we are lonely and awe-stricken in the midst of the boundless sweep of universal life. In the infinite reaches of thought and feeling, we need the word of Jesus to show us that all the realms of life are the house of our father, whose love and mercy never fail. Every soul should have its retreat where it can hold its sweet and solemn tryst with the Eternal. Into that retreat no traffic of business or finance should ever be permitted to come. The place will at length become polarized by the character of its occupants and the thoughts and feelings therein cherished. The guest-chamber partakes of the character of the guests.

Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. We might do well, therefore, to cleanse the courts and avenues of our own life, casting out all hindrances and setting in order the things that remain, so that we may cleave the way to our proper goal. If we are sincere and intelligent disciples, we will see that our bodies are fit to be temples of the Spirit of Jesus.

FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH

(Tuesday)

Have faith in God.—MARK xi. 22.

To some minds the cursing of the fig-tree compels a choice between a perfect record and a perfect

Christ. To such the consistency of the character of Jesus himself is at stake if this narrative be a correct record of facts. It is significant, however, that such minds almost invariably have more confidence in the perfections of Jesus than in the infallibility or inerrancy of the writers and their books.

Whatever may be the view of the historicity of the narrative of the fig-tree, Jesus' teaching as to faith, as given in this connection, is sufficiently sublime to meet the demands of the loftiest spirit. "All things whatsoever ye desire when ye pray, if ye believe that ye receive them ye shall have them." The statement is large, but faith also is large—too large for definition. In the form of a certain unconscious urging, faith is found everywhere in nature. In man it takes form in perseverance; elsewhere it is a tendency, a development, but everywhere there is demonstration of faith. This universal drift towards greatness and goodness is evidence of God's faith in the universe, in Himself, in man. That a life buds and blossoms into noble fruitage of grace and usefulness, or even that there are aspirations to such a harvest, shows that the Supreme Soul has faith in our capacity for great and gracious work. Surely such a fact should banish despair from our hearts.

The old adage, "Where there's a will there's a way," is a popular proverbial endorsation of the sweeping statement of Jesus quoted above. But Jesus gives faith a personal application to a Great Being whose care is over all His works. He satisfies the yearning of humanity for a Heavenly Father, and thus takes away the world's orphanhood. He

sets man in the family of God, puts him in the universe as a child in his father's home, and tells him to nestle close to the Father's loving heart.

In order more thoroughly to realize this relation and to appreciate more fully the reality of God's life in our souls, it is necessary to resort to more frequent communion with Him. Intellectual belief in the existence of the Eternal Father whom Jesus revealed is not religious faith, and however valuable such a mental view may be, it can have no great religious uses. There must be a consciousness of the reality of God's life as an experience in the soul, just as we may have a consciousness of any friend's love by communion with that friend. By such a union with the Spirit of God the divine life flows in and makes us strong and beautiful. We become great as we assume the likeness of Eternity ; our souls are tuned to harmony with the Infinite.

"Whatsoever ye desire." This is not a scheme for obtaining that upon which we have no claim. All such schemes are unjust. They cannot succeed ; the nature of things, the laws of life, the will of God embodied in those laws, forbid success in such a case. Nothing can be mine in any satisfactory sense except as I am in partnership with God. Prayer is the means by which the soul of man enters into such partnership. Then all the forces of the world become our willing slaves. They conspire to strengthen us in those courses ordained of God. If we follow God's will and purpose in God's way we shall be masters in the realm of life.

A large conception of the majesty and beauty of God, the glory of His law and the infinite harmonies

of His will, are necessary to any adequate faith. It is not necessary for us, however, to indulge in any self-depreciation. We are not godless, therefore we are not despicable. Faith must have its basis in a divine-human relation. Our faith in Jesus and in the great truths he presents should give us confidence that God's grace and power shall equip us for the tremendous tasks of eternity. Our experience, if we make the essay, will soon confirm our faith in a career of victory and freedom.

We must remember that only fellow-workers with God can win the battle of life, for life is a divine human project in which God is the silent but all resourceful Partner.

“ Have faith in God.”

CREDENTIALS

(Tuesday)

By what authority doest thou these things, or who gave thee this authority to do these things?

MATT. xxi. 23 ; MARK xi. 28 ; LUKE xx. 2.

Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not ?

MATT. xxii. 17 ; MARK xii. 14 ; LUKE xx. 22.

In Judaea, in the days of Jesus, no prophet could hope to have any influence with the Jews unless authorized or commissioned either by the Sanhedrim or by some prominent person who had the confidence of the people.

This was important not only as a means of gaining influence over the people, but in a ritualistic nation

like Israel it was a credential of divine authority, just as ordination is in these days regarded in most churches as an authorization to administer the sacraments.

Any means by which he could be dishonoured or degraded before the people was a desideratum to these false-hearted Pharisees. They would show the people out of his own mouth that he had no credentials authorizing him to teach, much less to expel the money-lords from the temple courts.

“ By whom were you authorized to do these things ? ”

Jesus did not evade the question. He never feared any man. No true man ever needs to. He answered them fairly. He did not ignore their question or shirk the issue raised. He would not thus score a cheap victory. Jesus would not stoop to such tactics.

“ Was the baptism of John of divine origin ? ”

Jesus had a divine commission under the seal of John, whose baptism the people believed in and the divine voice had attested. No man, in that day and in that city, who valued his name dared to deny it. No man dared to say that the public testimony of John to the personal character and divine mission of Jesus was invalid. John, the rugged, austere prophet, was, in the eyes of the people, as high an authority as any by which the noblest sanhedrist was accredited.

Not that Jesus needed the authority of John, but he was practical and would not ignore any symbol by which the value of his mission might be enhanced or its success hastened in the nation or in the world.

The confusion of these self-appointed inquisitors was complete. A retreat was their only hope of maintaining a dignity to them all-important. They would try another plan.

At this time certain Jews, restive under the Roman rule, had organized a nationalist party in Jerusalem. They wished to make Herod independent of Rome. Of course, they were not numerous, or Herod would have lost his head. No Jew was obliged to assert either his adherence or his opposition to these Herodians, for they were not sufficiently numerous to be influential. But the Pharisees knew that Jesus would not hesitate to state any conviction that he felt should be stated, and they hoped he would fall an easy prey to their instruments, the Herodians, whom they now instigated to ask him another critical question.

“Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar?”

Again Jesus did not evade the question, but by a straight and fair answer stated the great principle by which all such questions should be determined by each individual for himself.

“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.”

Jesus never discredited human judgment by ignoring it. Every man must make his own particular application of the principles by which men ought to live. So Jesus said, “Here is the principle; give it your best consideration. How each applies it, is nothing, except that he must apply it honestly and sincerely. The same with every principle.” And thus he closed the incident.

OBEDIENCE

(Tuesday)

Whether of the twain did the will of his father ?

MATT. xxi. 31.

One said, " I go, sir," and went not ; the other said, " I will not," but repented and went, thus doing, though tardily, his Father's will. And Jesus said, " The publicans and the harlots, having repented and obeyed, go into the Kingdom of Heaven before you Pharisees."

Obedience is one of the finest, rarest and noblest qualities man can exhibit towards God. Every parent knows the value of obedience. Its chief value is not in the work accomplished, but in the love and allegiance which it proves to exist in the obedient heart.

For this reason Jesus ever set the highest estimate upon obedience. We have text after text showing this :

" If a man love me he will keep my word."

" Whosoever keepeth my word, he it is that loveth me."

" If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Obedience is the surest evidence of love. Love does not wait for specific commands, but knows the heart and desire so thoroughly as to anticipate the slightest wish. It runs before expression and arrives ahead of the commandment. Thus, true obedience is a heart-response to the unspoken behest of Love.

The paid servant is a good servant if he does all he is told to do. The disciple, however, is in a

different case. He is learning to know the heart of the Master, to live in his spirit, by his methods, and thus to reproduce his life-qualities. This is the whole duty of a disciple.

The tyro who turns to God to escape "the wrath to come" occupies himself chiefly with attention to negatives. "Thou shalt not this" and "Thou shalt not that." Renunciations keep him busy, and for the present this negative course satisfies his heart. He is taking care of his own future, afraid of the consuming fires of God. But a day comes when the disciple learns that God has given him positive obligations and sufficient faculty for their performance. He sees at length that he must be positive rather than negative, that, indeed, everything that is accomplished in this world is the achievement of the positive spirit, and that the negative never reaches conclusions other than those prompted by fear. He sees that he has been worse than useless as a negative spirit, just as a negative quantity is less than zero. He sees that those upon whom God depends for the progress of His Kingdom are not those who fear to do the wrong so much as those who dare to do the strong, heroic right, because they have faith in the Divine Will and love for the Divine Heart.

In the first stage, he finds all law in the writings of the sacred books, but he begins to find that God's law is written in his own heart. In as far as he obeys, God reveals His will to him directly. Thus he is led to search his own heart for the commandments God has given to other men. God writes His law in the heart of His disciple, and as the

disciple obeys that word it becomes more and more precious to him, till at length the written law is as if it had not been written in the books, for it is superseded by the law written in his heart.

Here, however, there is danger that he may misinterpret God's voice and depart from the ways of wisdom. He should never violate the general spirit of the Sacred Writings, for these are the words of God as attested by other hearts and confirmed by a thousand decades of human wisdom and experience. The letter of God's word will vary as it comes to one or another life, but the spirit is one and unchangeable. The Sacred Writings are the major classics of the human race, and should be venerated as the nearest approach to a perfect expression of God's will.

The value of repentance as a means of progress is here exemplified. Repentance is an act of the soul requiring heroism, courage and decision. Often it means an entire change of life in obedience to the voice of the Spirit. Every man has a warning spirit like that of Socrates, though all are not as conscious of it as Socrates was. Obedience to that voice is repentance, but there should be a crisis in the life of men when they definitely, for themselves, make the supreme choice and blaze through the forest of life the direction in which they wish forever to move.

Next to a clearer consciousness of the unseen God and His will towards men, nothing is so much needed to-day as the strength and courage to repent.

COMPEL THEM TO COME IN

(Tuesday)

Go ye into the streets and lanes of the city.—MATT. xxii.

Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased.—LUKE xiv. 11.

It was the Sabbath day in Jerusalem, and Jesus healed a man while the feast was spread in the house of a chief Pharisee, and showed how reasonable and right it was to do so. He advised the guests to take the humble places at public feasts, and enjoined his host to invite the lowly to such functions. Then the story: A certain host, finding his invitation ignored by the well-to-do, sent for the poor and unfortunate of the city and suburbs, and these came, both bad and good.

Jesus preferred working among the poor. He was poor himself. In the opinion of many, he was not quite respectable. He came to call sinners. Those who were so exasperatingly perfect as to be perfect nonentities were not interesting to Jesus. He was not perfect himself in the Pharisaical sense of the word. He was forever violating the proprieties of a "perfect" law in his eagerness to do those things for which his heart pleaded. He abrogated many a time the mere letter of the word, yet was ever loyal to the law. His discriminate infringement of the law was virtually a perfect observance; his religious non-observance of it was in every way admirable.

Jesus taught his disciples that the lowly of heart are on the sure road to peace. The story of the king's supper in Matt. xxii., as also that in Luke

xiv., is an illustration of the first Beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." (Jesus made no comparison between God and the story king, whose brutality the Master would certainly have condemned.)

We all share Jesus' preference for the poor in spirit. The self-satisfied are interesting to us only as an educated dog or horse might be. We can have no communion with one who is absorbed in his own sublimities and perfections.

Without the love and fellowship of other kindred hearts, the soul is lonely amid the fearsome vastness of that spiritual ocean which stretches infinitely around this little island of the material. But, hand in hand, our eyes fixed on a common goal, we can share the joys and sorrows of this life on earth, and in fellowship, face confidently "the tremendous adventure of death" and beyond.

Contrary to the method of to-day, which is to give the people what they demand for entertainment, Jesus sought to give his hearers that conception of the truth which was essential to their highest good.

According to Matthew, he now related a further incident in the story. One of the guests seems to have deemed his own dress good enough, and perhaps even wanted the others to observe that his was even more showy than that provided by the King. He was cast out into the night. Thus Jesus showed how inevitably the soul that will be separate and find its joy apart is sequestered and ignored.

Jesus often used the wedding feast as a theme. Marriage is a symbol of the soul's union with the Eternal, and the consequent blossoming and fruitage

of life. Love, to a Christly heart, is incident to every experience, and not to marriage alone. Jesus was never married, yet he exemplified a large sweet love that takes every needy soul into its bosom and is glad. We are so local and selfish in our marriage relation that God keeps many a sublime heart unattached so that its love may flow into every avenue where sympathy is needed. Nevertheless, all the most Christly hearts of the race are finding heaven, not in being loved, but in loving.

IN THE RESURRECTION

(Tuesday)

In the resurrection, whose wife of them would she be ?

MATT. xxii. 28.

The Sadducees believed neither in Jesus nor the resurrection. Many in these days fail to believe because the teaching of Jesus on this subject is so crudely presented. Jesus did not say that the physical body would rise again. Neither did Paul, who, no doubt, if not at first hand, at least through the other apostles, understood Jesus' teaching on the subject very thoroughly.

The doctrine of the resurrection is so important that we should seek to know not only its method but also its significance.

Death ends our relation with the physical, and the resurrection puts us into a new environment, to our mortal eyes invisible, to these physical hands intangible, and not subject to physical laws. All,

therefore, of marriage, or, indeed, of any institution that pertains to the material plane, must end with death and the resurrection.

Cowper's poem is quite in harmony with New Testament teaching when he sings :

Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing thy power to save,
When this poor lisping, stammering tongue,
Lies silent in the grave.

The same truth is shown in Paul's statement that the body which is buried "is not that body which shall be."

In this hard-cruised world we are in laborious, expensive and painful bondage to dimensions, barriers and forms. Only the strongest and clearest-sighted spirits can master physical conditions to such an extent as to live care-free in reference to their own comfort.

The life in "the body that shall be" will have its own laws. Every physical bond will loosen, every material relation cease, and immaterial conditions alone remain. Then we shall realize how true are the words of Jesus, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father, the same is my brother and sister and mother." No essentially spiritual union is impaired by death. Jesus lost none of his love for John, the beloved disciple, none of his beautiful affection for Mary of Bethany, when he entered the resurrection-life.

In the sense in which the Sadducees regarded marriage, there is none in the life to come. Spiritual affinities alone prevail ; true affection has freer scope, being uncloyed by physical impediments. Even

here, it is soul qualities which are the basis of all permanent and real attractions rather than a pretty face or shapely figure.

The spirit, like a note of music, will blend with beautiful effect in a sweet harmony with every other spirit that fits its music to that thrilling chord. The physical law of marriage will have no close analogue in the spirit life, but a larger, more comprehensive and more heavenly relation will obtain.

They are as the angels, who apart,
Know themselves into one.¹

WOES AND WARNINGS

(*Tuesday*)

Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites.—MATT. xxiii.

Jesus seldom used invective, but he knew love's value, hence he met with severe denunciation everything that obstructed its beneficent way. When the soul realizes what joy and sorrow mean, it has small toleration for those who trifle either with the sorrow or the gladness of the human heart. When it knows that the innocent gaiety of a child, or the ecstasy that thrills the soul of a saint, is but one wave of that great ocean of infinite joy which surges in the souls of all conscious beings, and that its own consciousness of sorrow is a part of the universal minor which gives to the music of eternity its pathos and its tenderness, then it no longer wonders at the severe words of Jesus.

¹ Browning.

The Pharisees were experts in religious observance. Scrupulous and hypercritical in the minutest detail, they lost sight of the whole realm of judgment and mercy ; zealously absorbed in the performance of microscopic duties and the observance of exacting forms, they had no time to glance, much less to gaze, into the wide firmament of truth and love.

In his terrific denunciation Jesus gave no license to neglect the religious ordinances of the household and the temple, He sought for a simple and natural means of expression of the religious life of the people in affectionate care for one another and a reverent love of God whose children we are. He recognized the high uses of religious ordinances when their observance was a spontaneous expression of filial affection, but he denounced mere lip service—telling God three times a day, by way of praise and adoration, how excellent He is. Jesus would have us make love-work of duty and praise God by practising His excellences in our dealings with our fellow-men.

The church roll has no definite relation to the Kingdom of God except for the purpose of material economy. Jesus recognized no “walled in,” “I am holier than thou” church, but in his great comprehensive soul he beheld a city without a temple, where sorrow, tears and darkness are banished forever ; a city whose invisible shrines are in the people’s hearts, where every meal is a sacrament and every business transaction an opportunity for sublime communion with our fellow-citizens and with God.

Jesus ended these woes to the Pharisees in tears, and turned from the temple to the temple city with

a moan. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often, but ye would not. Behold, you desolate." "Notwithstanding all your dreary forms, your tithings of mint and dill, your glory shall be a heap of debris, your noble temple a home for owls and bats."

After a few troubled years it was as Jesus had said. The ark of God was visible no more, the shekinah was henceforth in human hearts; a sweeter, simpler, purer life-blood coursed in the arteries of a church refined in the cleansing fires of sacrifice and martyrdom. As in the sifting at Ararat, and Ur, and Sodom, in the wilderness, and the captivity, God's method of divine selection was now once more to be applied, and a remnant once more saved to save the world.

The Pharisees had covered, under their burdensome ordinances, the real intent of religion, so that all the venerable beauty of Jerusalem had to be swept away, and all that now remains of it is but a record, a pathetic chronicle of the departed glory of that ancient city.

Has the religion of Jesus found adequate and unperverted expression in this modern day? Do we see life and truth from the view-point of Jesus?

Do we not think of Jesus more in terms of Paul's Roman environment, or even of Darwin's *Origin of Species*? Should we not rather think of Paul's martyr-life than of his legal theories? Can we not learn to think in terms of Jesus' life and to regard the giving of our lives for others as the highest good? Can we not see that the whole fabric of society needs, with a perilous urgency, the reconstructive labours of

our hand, the healing spirit of our mind and heart, inspired by Jesus' life and death.

God help us and forgive.

May He give us courage and conviction that we may sail out into hitherto unnavigated seas, over those waters where His love directs our course, even though we may thereby have to relinquish many a beautiful and venerable dream.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

(Thursday)

Do this in remembrance of me.—LUKE xxii. 19.

All Jesus' wonderful illustrative stories were ended; ended were all his solemn woes and warnings. Every critic was silenced, every objector answered, and Jesus resorted to the mountain with his disciple band.

The plot of this greatest world-tragedy was thickening. Wednesday was spent in quiet seclusion at Bethany, while Judas conspired with the priests. What a day it was of strengthening for the coming battle. What a day of memorable joy to his Bethany friends, as they listened to the young Master while he matched his sublime wisdom with the music of his voice and word.

Thursday evening came, and Jesus, with the twelve, observed the Passover in the upper room in the city. The meal was, no doubt, taken in solemn and grateful review of all God's mercies to their fathers. How many memorable incidents are crowded into that

brief hour. There was the announcement of his betrayal, the departure of Judas, the blessing of the cup and the institution of the Lord's memorial ; the washing of the disciples' feet, the intimation to Peter that Satan had desired to sift him, those sublime discourses of comfort, instruction and warning recorded in John xiv., xv., which might well be called The Sermon in the Upper Room, the prayer of John xvii., the hymn and the departure to the mountain.

Jesus sometimes forgot his own welfare, forgot to eat, to sleep, etc. ; but he never forgot his divine mission. He girded himself with a towel like a slave and washed his disciples' feet. What a perfect lesson in humility, and how thoroughly consistent with all his lowly life and lofty teaching. How searching an appeal was his warning to Peter. The central incident of the Passover, how full of the humanism of Jesus, and yet with what solicitude he regarded the cause of the Kingdom.

Jesus was consciously taking his last Passover—his last meal, indeed, with his disciples, before his suffering. What more natural and human than his appeal to them to keep his memory in their hearts ? “ As oft as ye eat or drink, do it in remembrance of me.” Do not forget your Friend and Master. I shall be with you, though unseen. I will say to you, “ Let not your hearts be troubled.” You shall perceive that I am with you. This shall be a means by which the Kingdom shall be the more surely established in the earth.

How appropriate it is that all the Christian world should observe this solemn memorial as a love-tribute to Jesus. It is Love's perennial response

to love. Love spoke in Jesus' life, and the fleeting generations are still singing Love's sweet, immortal song.

Among the latest injunctions of Jesus to his disciples before he put aside the earthly vesture was this, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world?" The same day he was executed as a criminal, nevertheless the world accepts his word and owns him as its conqueror.

Such were his works of love, his words of life, such the inspiration of his lofty, lowly life of light and love and strength and beauty.

If the world could forget Jesus, it would not; if it would forget him, it could not.

THE NEW COMMANDMENT

The Sermon on the Mount was a discourse on the moral phases of discipleship, sources of happiness, anger, impurity, divorce, oaths, revenge, love, liberality, prayer, fasting, laying up treasures, the cares of life, judging others, the rules of life and life's permanent foundations in character. The discourse in the upper room covered, in one universal principle, the whole law of life. It also laid the foundation of a great hope for the life everlasting.

Jesus removed his tunic and, as a towel-girded slave, washing their dusty feet, gave to his disciples his personal service as the testimony of his love.

"*You, Master!* Are *you* going to wash my feet?" said Peter.

It was even so. Jesus here gave an illustration of personal service as the only satisfactory evidence of Christian life and love.

First the deed, then the word. Prove your love for one another by serving one another. This new commandment to love and serve one another is the sum of Jesus life-teaching on its human side.

Having completed his instruction in the higher life of the present, he gave them a vision of the future. He told them of the beauty and spaciousness of the Father's house, and of the way thither along paths of love and service which he had opened,—“I am the way.” Then he told them of the Comforter, the Spirit that rules the world, how that Spirit would cut off unfruitful branches and cleanse the fruitful ones, how The Father had given to the Son all things to be his possession. He said he did not need to intercede with the Father for them, for the Father himself loved them.

And now he comforted them with the assurance that although they should have tribulation in this world they should have peace in him.

Then the prayer, that noble prayer, a beautiful outpouring of his soul in thrilling expression of his oneness with God, of sympathy with his disciples, of love and tenderness for all. “Father, my desire for all those whom thou hast given me—for those also who become believers in me through their teaching—is that they may be with me where I shall be; may such love as Thou hast for me be in their hearts, that they may be one with me as I am one with Thee.

Thus Jesus revealed the secrets of his heart and

discoursed of love and the future life. A few deathless souls know themselves immortal by direct revelation, but the assurance of Jesus, who gave us the highest evidence of his knowledge, is still the chief hope of the world and is stronger evidence of a life unending than the testimony of all other mystics. He said he came from God, and the memory of that prenatal life in the presence of his Father swept through his soul and thrilled it with rapture. He claimed that a similar experience would be the lot of all who love one another and keep the law of love and service. This is the testimony of Jesus who now, having comforted the disciples and asked them not to forget him, left the upper room and went out into the night.

GETHSEMANE

(Thursday)

Lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.—MATT. xxvi.

Jesus often resorted to the mountains and the solitudes. He delighted in society, but when confronted with a supreme crisis he sought the desert or the darkness, and there in the wide spaces beneath the lofty stars he opened his being to the immanent Spirit.

The soul must escape from the enchantment of physical environment before it can be a free citizen of the infinite. It must be one with the soul of all, or it will not receive force and fortitude from God. Jesus went with the disciples into the garden

a man in whom was conscious weakness ; he came out strong as eternity. He went in halting ; he came out on eagles' wings. He had been feeling the jarring of local discords, but soon he touched the universal chord and joined the eternal harmony. He had felt the need of a watch, but soon he felt that nothing could befall him in all his Father's realms but what was welcome for his Father's sake. " Sleep on now and take your rest ; I need your vigilance no longer."

The olive garden called Gethsemane is the most notable of all earth's battlefields, for there the greatest of conquerors conquered himself. " Be of good cheer," he said, " I have overcome the world," and then proceeded to a greater conquest, the victory over his own heart.

Jesus at this time never doubted the correctness of his course, but his imminent betrayal by a disciple depressed his mind and produced a physical heaviness similar to that which culminated in that cry of God-forsakenness upon the cross a few hours later.

Like a cloud of shame and horror, the perfidious part which Judas was playing crept over the heart of Jesus. This consciousness of evil, even though in the heart of another, must be triumphed over. Jesus must be Jesus, strong, clear-souled, eternal, in this final conflict, else the music of his life would be marred and his work ineffective. He left the disciples apart in the darkness and the silence, and from beneath those gnarled old olive trees he sent up to heaven such an appeal as only an agonized heart can inspire.

It is always possible to banish depression, but it may cost many a cry of agony and draw blood before we get into tune with the eternal heart. It is always worth the cost to clear the sky so we can see God's smile, to quiet the local storm so we can hear the music of eternity.

How we lose patience with those stupid disciples who could sleep in that supreme hour. How we lose patience with those stupid ones in this day who are altogether devoted to the concrete and have no idealism in them. Let us not judge. They do not know. Are not we also sometimes in our ignorance quite indifferent to God's eternal doings. Idealism is a perfect plant and cannot be developed in a day, nor even in three-and-a-half years.

When Jesus achieved oneness with eternity he was supreme. What a ring of triumph sounds through his sentence as he says, "Sleep on now and take your rest. He that betrayeth me is here. Rise. Let us be going." How he marched out to meet in gladness the inevitable will of God. Eagerly he walked, and intentionally, straight into the hands of his enemies. Perfect love had cast out fear. His time was come to be lifted up and to draw all men to him. When we know the perfect will of God we shall run to fulfil it at any cost.

BEFORE PILATE

(Friday)

For this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth.—JOHN xviii. 37.

It was Passover night in Jerusalem. The memorial hour was long past, but hoarse voices broke upon the ear from time to time, and it was evident that some unusual thing was on foot. The wakeful population was restless, and many hurried to and fro under the big white moon now declining in the west over the Palace of Herod. As the early morning broke Jesus was led from one high priest to another, from the high priest to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, then back again to Pilate, who, with all his baseness and weakness, was less ignoble than the priests.

The soul is always on trial. Curious, critical eyes, friendly or inimical, examine our lives and judge us every day. On the other hand, probably none of us is quite innocent of the habit of analyzing other lives. Each of us is both judge and prisoner, and the ostensible judge is often the virtual prisoner, while the prisoner is the real judge.

The King stood before the Procurator ; strength and nobility confronting baseness and weakness.

For Jesus the chief conflict occurred at Gethsemane ; there he had gained the victory over himself, and self is ever the mightiest foe.

It was evidently the impertinent charges of the priests that Jesus ignored, and not the reasonable questions of Pilate. John, who was present and

gives us the fullest account of the trial, says not a word of Jesus having refused to answer Pilate.

“ Art thou the King of the Jews ? ”

Neither “ yes ” nor “ no ” would have been the whole truth in answer to this question. Pilate would have misunderstood either answer. Jesus was, therefore, very explicit and introduced his answer by asking, Sayest thou this of thyself, or did another tell it thee of me ? Jesus asked this question, not through curiosity, not the better to defend himself ; he had probably quite forgotten that he was now on trial for treason against Rome, forgotten that his own life was at stake.

His own fate was lost sight of, his only care being to awaken Pilate to the new and larger life of the spirit.

Pilate resented this question, not knowing its purpose, so Jesus hastened to explain that the real nature of his Kingdom was not temporal, that he was not a king of the purple and gold type, but in that realm where the human heart is one with the Eternal and feels a divine response to every appeal in the peace of God which sweeps its sweet and solemn current through the soul and makes the whole life glad. But he did not get an opportunity to explain fully. He had spoken of his Kingdom, and Pilate, with quick ear, caught the word, and asked :

“ Art thou a king, then ? ”

And Jesus answered : “ Thou sayest that I am a king. . . . I was born to bear witness to the truth.” This is Jesus’ statement of his mission to one who did not know, and it was given officially. He said at various times that he came to bind

broken hearts, to tell glad news to the poor, to bear witness to the truth. He said he did not come to judge, he did not come to call the righteous, and he led Pilate to understand that he was not a Jewish king, else Pilate would not have pronounced him innocent.

Pilate, musing, asked further : “ What is truth ? ” He did not wait for an answer. Jesus himself was the answer. “ I am the way, the truth and the life.” It was his mission to make manifest to men the light and love and life of God. “ He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

The vision of God is still the prime need of the human heart. Jesus, by his life and word, made that vision possible, and by that vision men are brought to the new birth, the birth of the spirit life within.

Jesus was delivered by Pilate to be crucified ; yet Jesus, the prisoner, had been condemned. Pilate had done the thing he knew to be unjust and was self-condemned, notwithstanding his farcical ablution. Jesus, on the contrary, was consistent with himself, faithful to his mission, and had transacted his father's business.

We make the most stupid estimates of success. Too often we have a vulgar faith in glitter and gold, in brazen trumpets and regalia. In the presence of this young Hebrew the dignity of Pilate is ludicrous. The light of this perfect life, struggling out of the Augustan age by ways of blood and fire, gathered strength and brightness as it shone till it illumined the whole earth with its splendours and crowned the human race with majesty.

Jesus, the crucified, has become the King of men.

CRUCIFIXION

(Friday)

They crucified him.—MATT. xxvii. 35.

Jesus had seen some things unnoticed by other eyes and had proclaimed their meaning. This had disturbed the serenity and condemned the selfish usages of the rulers, who, failing to silence the young and popular teacher by methods less severe, determined to destroy him and extinguish the light which he had kindled.

In all probability they believed his proclamation of human fraternity to be mischievous ; it is almost certain that they regarded his claim of divine sonship for all men as heterodox, pernicious and even blasphemous. It is easy to be assured of the sanctity of ancient usages, however unjust ; it is quite common to assume the correctness of time-honoured beliefs, however absurd. Without any clear thought or careful investigation, the rulers had mistaken their prejudices for principles and had enforced those prejudices in the exploitation of the people. They forgot that principles that are not founded in the highest welfare of the people are not, and never can be, right.

That is a noble conduct which acts uniformly according to a clear vision of duty, careless of personal consequences and guided only by the conviction that such conduct is for the best interests of the human race.

“ Act in conformity with that maxim, and with

that maxim only, which you can, at the same time, will to be a universal law.”¹

Jesus was strength itself. The forces of the unseen were his eager servitors. His consciousness of his Father's presence was a source of constant joy and satisfaction. His heart, made perfect through suffering, was tender as a mother's. Sorrows due to the waywardness of Israel increased in his soul with the increasing years, yet that soul grew ever more tender and more kind. That any soul had yielded to sin was to Jesus only another voice to call out a deeper compassion and a larger gift of love. Jesus cured sin with the divine medicine of love and forgiveness and a new heart.

And now the swift feet of his enemies had overtaken this young man, beautiful with all the perfections with which truth and love and conscious power enrich the soul. He was condemned to die forthwith upon the cross.

The peace of God was resting over all the fields and vineyards of Judaea, and Jerusalem was fragrant with the odours of spring. But in the city, as the daylight increased, the mob, having taken its character and tendency in the night, swelled to larger and larger numbers of thoughtless and heartless ruffians bent on the death of one whom, if they had known him, they must have loved with all their limited power. All this might have been tolerable to Jesus had not his disciples, or most of them, forsaken him. John alone appears to have been faithful to his Master.

Jesus, in this dark hour of loneliness and sorrow,

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysics of Ethics*.

had the tender sympathy of one beloved disciple, and was assured also of the loyalty and love of the three Marys—of Bethany, Magdala, and Nazareth. This was the one ray of light to mitigate the awful suffering of that tragic hour. No wonder that the Christian world has in all ages honoured these friends of Jesus, or that John and Mary are the most used and the most loved of all Christian names.

But how shall we picture this tragedy so as to make it at all real to the heart of the reader? In the place of Jesus put that soul that has more than any other made your life abound with unspeakable joy, so that in learning the meaning of love you have lost the consciousness of sacrifice. Let all the strength and sweetness that you know in that life be confronted with the storm of pain and tragedy and sorrow that now swept over the soul of Jesus. Imagine the howling mob jeering at him you love more than life; conceive the sharp thorns pressed by brutal hands into his quivering flesh; see them spit upon him as they jostle him standing there, his hands fastened with relentless thongs—those hands you have so often pressed with infinite tenderness; see your loved one carry the too heavy cross; see him exhausted beneath it, and, finally, see him weak, weary and broken-hearted, nailed to the awful structure and hanging there exposed for hours to the gaze of that brutal throng.

If this picture were actual in the case of any one of us, we should surely go mad. But there is worse still. Let your loved one feel that he has cause to doubt your love; let him feel that your cowardice is greater than your love. Last, and worse than

all else, let him feel that God, too, has forsaken him, and the thought is too frightful for contemplation.

Yet such was the fate of Jesus, the man whose character was such that all good people love him more than life, and whose divine relation was such that we worship him and name him God. Such was the death of Jesus, but all his suffering and sorrow could not make him forget his mother. He committed her to John's love and tender care, commended his own spirit to the Father, and died.

It was a small thing that the temple veil was torn and a few rocks were splintered now. Greater things than these had been consummated. The veil of history was rent in twain. Chronology, which hitherto had always looked forward, now became two-faced like Janus, and looked both ways.

Above all else, and most significant of all, Jesus had shown the human race how the world's sin is to be abolished and the divine life established by Love—Infinite, Everlasting, Unfathomable, Unutterable Love.

And loving hands gently and reverently loosened the still white form from its awful death-frame, and friends with tearful eyes and broken hearts carried that temple of God, the noblest this earth has ever seen, laid it tenderly in Joseph's tomb, and rolled the stone before the door; then silence settled on the place, and hopelessness filled all their hearts with sorrow and with gloom, for Jesus of Nazareth was dead.

CONQUEST OF DEATH

RESURRECTION

(*Sunday*)

He is not here, he is risen.—MATT. xxviii.

THE sun had set and risen again ; the Jewish Sabbath had begun and ended. Those who had hoped that Jesus would have redeemed Israel were in despair. And yet their sorrow deepened that sweet sense of his real presence which every soul that has truly loved another knows so well. The absence of the physical Jesus only heightened their realization of the presence of the perfect Christ. The actual gave place to the heavenly ideal. The sight of the body was gone, but the subtler light of the spirit was increased.

Among those who lingered lovingly near the tomb was Mary of Magdala. Not hoping for anything but to be permitted to serve her Master, she came with the others to anoint his body, but found him not.

“ Mary.”

The music of that voice thrilled her whole being with joy, and restored her lost hope. She turned and looked—it was the Master !

Thus began that series of appearances which restored the lost hope of the church, which indeed created the church ; for no church, in the larger sense of the word, can be built around a dead Christ. How that voice and those appearances of Jesus once more transfigured the world with their light and power and sweetness !

Matthew, Peter, Luke, John, Paul, and James all assert that Jesus was killed, and that he came to life again. If he did not rise, then they were either deceived or deceivers. But they were hard-headed, conservative and almost criminally unbelieving men, and not likely to be deceived in such matters. They were not expecting his resurrection, though he had foretold it, and they were hard to convince when it had occurred. They were, therefore, unfitted to be deceivers. Besides, they would scarcely have claimed that he was crucified had it not been a fact, for it showed that they had given their allegiance to one who died as a malefactor. Being dead, it would have been still more difficult to convince the Jews that a malefactor had risen from the dead, and that they who had put him to death were murderers, when they were only killing an evildoer. The apostles had to die as witnesses of the resurrection, and yet they asserted it in the teeth of all such dangers.

On the other hand, if Jesus was not alive, is it not strange that three thousand Jews believed he was, when Peter adduced the evidence ? The Pharisees believed it, and there is no evidence to show that any effort was made to controvert the fact, which was too well substantiated to admit of any doubt on the part of those concerned.

I know there is confusion in the minds of many as to the nature of the resurrection, and it must be admitted that the difficulties are many. I have no desire to discuss the probable fate of the physical body of Jesus. The mind that is clear on the fact that the rising of the spiritual body out of the physical is the essential feature of the resurrection, and that the spiritual is always primary and the physical secondary in the final analysis of the real, is capable of thinking safely for itself on this question.

The story of the Roman guard is quite impossible in every way. It left them open to punishment by death on their own evidence. It showed them liars all, for how could they bear testimony to what took place while they slept. The explanation is quite out of the question, except that it may have been suggested by other thoughtless persons as an excuse. The guard would never urge such a statement as an explanation of the disappearance.

In Jesus' death and resurrection, the spiritual was emphasized just as he had himself always emphasized the spiritual in his life. The physical was always very important, but very secondary to the spirit, which was the strong essential fibre of his being. Hence it is not amazing that the physical body was lost sight of or dissipated, and this may have been for the establishment of the disciples' belief that Jesus was alive. The fact that he was seen and recognized by so many would doubtless divert their attention from the physical remains, and none would recognize that the change observed in his appearance—for there was a marked change—was due to the fact that this which they now

saw, with eyes opened specially for that purpose, was his spiritual and not his physical body.

There is no evidence, however, that anyone saw Jesus after his resurrection, excepting those who had their spiritual vision opened, or those to whom he miraculously revealed his spiritual being.

If there had been no evidence of miracle in the post-resurrection life of Jesus, its absence would be the strongest possible argument for the contention of the materialist, that the resurrection never occurred and that "miracles never happen." That which is miraculous in the natural world is quite natural in the spiritual.

I do not deal with the difficulties of the resurrection. I shall not discuss this matter critically, yet I must say that to my mind no fact of history is based on a surer testimony than that Jesus was seen alive after his death on the cross. And yet, again, I can find no evidence whatever that leads me to the conclusion that Jesus was at all subject to physical conditions after his resurrection. He asked Thomas to touch him; he asked Mary not to touch him. The physical appealed to Thomas; it was necessary to perform a miracle for confirmation of his faith. To Mary this was not necessary—the spiritual appealed to her. He passed through doors open or shut, ate food or abstained; to him it did not matter which. He had no place of abode, no human shelter; he did not stay at the house of Lazarus over night; nobody knows where he stayed. No physical rest was needed for a body that was not physical. Then where was his physical body? I know not, but that does not change the

fact that he was no longer a prisoner in the flesh, no longer in bondage to space and time. He was free forever, and we, in him, have the assurance of eternal spiritual freedom. In the character of Jesus, as it becomes ours, we are made possessors of the life abounding; so in the resurrection of Christ we are assured of life enduring.

John and Peter are still the two who lead the other disciples in the drama. With him in his trials, with him in his triumphs, they, despite their failings, are ever dear to the hearts of all those who love Jesus.

The resurrection is evidenced in our hearts to-day. Jesus is alive for-evermore, and every renewal of life in those forms which once had the appearance of death, every voice once hushed which now we hear, every renewal of hope after apparent despair, is evidence of a universal resurrection in all the dominions of our God.

In the knowledge of Jesus and the faith of his risen life, we are strong, for we cannot but believe his testimony concerning the Father. We know we are in the hands of Him who is Eternal Love.

Love's torch alight, and safe the ark,
Upon the sea where souls embark;
In storm and fire, though wild the night,
Yet safe the ark—Love's torch alight.

On through the narrow straits of sleep,
Assured of life beyond, we sweep
From deep to deep, and trust thy might,
O Love, our Pilot! Love, our Light!

ASCENSION

He led them out as far as Bethany, and was parted from them.—LUKE xxiv. 50, 51.

It was necessary to the permanence of his Kingdom that Jesus should establish in the minds of his disciples the fact that he was not dead, but when this was once accomplished he appeared no more unless some great occasion required it. "Earth to earth." Spirit to spirit. The physical always turns to ashes when the spirit leaves it, but "the spirit is never born, neither does it die, nor, having been, does it ever cease to be."¹

The followers of Jesus were now fully persuaded that he was still alive. The personal knowledge of over five hundred disciples was available for testimony to those who should hereafter need evidence. Eleven times Jesus had appeared after his resurrection. Now that the higher reaches of life claimed his spirit he parted somewhat conspicuously from his disciples. He might have disappeared quietly, without anyone seeing his passing, but this would have been a rude shock to the faith of his followers, whose confidence was always too easily disturbed, hence he must make his departure a formal one. In doing so he is explicit in his statement of the fact that he is not really departing at all, but only in appearance. "Behold," he says, "I am with you always." They thought he was leaving them. He was only ceasing to appear miraculously to them. He was spirit. Whenever

¹ *Bhagavad Gita.*

a spirit appears to a mortal it is out of the natural order. The spiritual eyes have to be opened ; even then it is not the spirit itself, but the spiritual body, that is seen. Physical things are related to physical, and spiritual things to spiritual. This is true all the way up the gamut of life in the soul's progress through the infinite reaches of illimitable being.

In the disappearance which we call the ascension, we are too ready to think that Jesus set all law at defiance and turned things topsy-turvy in the house of life. But, so far was he from upsetting any of God's laws, he was really establishing them and convincing the disciples, and through the disciples all succeeding generations, that the essential man never dies, and therefore never turns to dust, but is regnant, as his character permits, in the centres of infinite life. He cannot die. It is only his earthly vesture, the instrument of his expression in the physical plane, that can decay.

Jesus set forth clearly the duty of the newly founded church, before his passing. He had one word of comfort, "Behold, I am with you always;" one word of command, "Disciple all nations," "Be missionaries all," and one word to the hearers of the truth everywhere, "He that believeth is saved."

Then he passed out of their sight. And the disciples, no doubt, felt lonely, not yet realizing the truth of Jesus' words, "Behold, I am alive forevermore." So they tarried together, waiting for the promised Comforter, waiting till the clamorous physical was forgotten in the glory of the Pentecostal inspiration, till they knew they were shielded by the divine love and equipped with the divine

power ; till they knew that they themselves were centres of the divine, and new expressions of God's life.

PENTECOST

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.—Acts ii. 4.

They waited according to Jesus' word. They talked, I am sure, about him. They repeated his gracious words, recalled his tender accents and the startling emphasis he laid upon forgotten truths. Many a misunderstanding, doubtless, was cleared away. Matthew, Peter and John, the future reporters of his life, would be able to get a clearer view of all the details stored away in their memories and hearts, and by comparison and adjustment correct many a slight error which otherwise would have crept into the record. Matthew may at this time have inscribed his famous "Logia," and it is pretty certain that the conference during these days was greatly helpful in formulating the "Triple Tradition" of the Synoptists, which is still the most valued writing in the world.

Probably the disciples wondered what sort of manifestation they were about to experience. They believed the word of Jesus, hence they tarried for ten days in Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, as always, things were active in the unseen realms. Scientists such as Crookes and Wallace, who have devoted much time to the study of occult forces, tell us of phenomena hitherto unappreciated by science, yet wonderfully interesting,

showing that a psychic or spiritual world exists within the world of physical phenomena. Countless hosts of human souls have tried by almost countless methods to elucidate the hints received from that world within a world. Many have satisfied themselves that they know its meaning, others equally patient and far better equipped, while quite as sure that such a world exists, are far from sure that they know much about it.

All careful investigators in this realm who have arrived anywhere in their explorations tell us that the character of those influences from the unseen which penetrate the separating veil is determined by the qualities in us that call them forth. They also admit and claim that almost any person who will use earnest, persistent and well-directed effort to get responsive phenomena from the psychic or spiritual world will be rewarded with some measure of success. Indeed, every devout soul knows that at times there seem to come into the consciousness

Dream-whispers in the darkness
That lift the soul to light.

All of which serves only to show that the unseen world is very real and capable of sending forth powers and producing effects truly startling and significant. Such is always the case where Pentecostal conditions exist. It may be claimed, these conditions never exist—which may be quite true, but the phenomena at Pentecost were in keeping with God's law, as all phenomena are.

Suddenly was heard a rushing noise like the sound of an approaching tempest ; a tongue of fire like

forked lightning touched each of them and remained for a time upon them as the visible emblem of that power which was henceforth through them to strengthen and enlighten the world.

The gift of tongues has been variously estimated as to value and permanency, but one thing is clear, that a wondrous light and joy came to the souls of the disciples that day and a power to do and to suffer altogether out of proportion to their former capacity.

The significance of Pentecost to the Christian world is in the fact that especial equipment is needed for the best and most enduring work, and that equipment is available to those who earnestly seek it from the highest sources.

What took place at Pentecost can be best stated to the Christian intelligence by saying that it was the fulfilment of Jesus' promise, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you," and "If I go away I will send the Comforter to you." The fact is that the Spirit of Jesus was the actual Comforter. The disciples had been so much occupied with the visible, physical Jesus that only when Jesus visible had disappeared could Christ, the Comforter invisible, be at all real to them.

Peter was the first to essay the newly acquired power. This was possibly by appointment, possibly by reason of the natural ardour of his disposition. He spoke. The resourcefulness of God was his, and the Highest spoke through him. Three thousand were added that day to the number of the believers. It was the beginning of that conquest of the world which is even yet in progress, widening its scope

and deepening its intensity as one generation tells another of that matchless and incomparable life which still lives and is available to every soul that looks with faith to God, believing that it receives it and determining to practise it.

CONCLUSION

We have followed the course of Jesus from the manger to the cross, from Bethlehem to Olivet. We have seen the conviction grow within his heart that he must in his own person fulfil the predictions of the prophets and be the restorer of Israel. We know that this ideal grew more and more comprehensive till it involved a universal Messiahship.

When this purpose became fixed in his mind and heart, all the dominions of the earth could not divert him from his chosen path. He conceived that the Servant of Jehovah in Israel was not to be conspicuous in worldly power or prestige, but in those universal graces that make for the realization of righteousness and the glory of human character. His wisdom is attested by those wonderful illustrative stories whose inspirations gleam like sunshine from the written word and are its most precious content ; but the spirit of a life is more significant than the letter of its words and deeds, however important these may be as the spirit's medium of expression.

As the wide base of the Great Pyramid obscures its height and dwarfs our conception of its vastness,

the supremacy of Jesus in each particular virtue causes us to overlook the transcendent glory of his character as a whole. Indeed, it is quite impossible accurately to estimate the aggregate effect of any life. The progress of the world during the Christian era, if not due wholly to the direct personal influence of Jesus, must certainly be attributed to the spirit of that life which he revealed to men.

In the ancient world politics was despotism, religion an appeasement, science a superstition, commerce an adventure. On the other hand, never was there a larger selflessness in the world than to-day. Never were more persons sacrificing their personal comfort for others' sake. The spirit of Jesus is daily championed by numberless persons who do not profess to be his followers or confess themselves as influenced in any way by his life or teaching.

All the great religions of the world, both ancient and modern, are now leavened by the spirit of Jesus. A modern rabbi's sermon, a yogi's exposition of Vedanta, any representative presentation of truth in modern times, will set forth clearly and unquestionably the leading principles of the Christian religion.

The religion of Jesus has the assurance of universality, because it insists upon the soul's personal relation to God ; so also, in its harmony with the great law of evolution, it has the assurance of eternal progress, the pledge of our forever going on. The life of Jesus is an everlasting rebuke to that spirit of materialism which places wealth above virtue, reputation above character, the comforts of the body

above the beauties of the soul ; which destroyed every noble ancient civilization and desecrates every sacred modern association with the curse of its Midas touch. Jesus' life was a crown to all that is kingly, but his great work, the supreme labour of his life and meaning of his death, was to show that every evil is abolished by the sovereign power of Love, the chief essential of God's character and being.

Christendom is ever more and more coming back to Christ. It has pinned its faith to almost every other centre of hope. It has trusted in kings and kingdoms ; in commerce, literature and art ; in churches, creeds and Scriptures ; but it has found at last that Christ alone is the centre of human hopes, the goal of our highest aspirations.

The kings who sought divine honours are dead ; the holy empires are no more. Tyre, Carthage and Venice, the queens of commerce, are wasted or decayed ; the old creeds are almost defunct, and the chief thing that keeps the Bible close to the world's heart is the fact that at its centre is the man Jesus with his strong and tender heart, the splendour of the ages.

There is more of Christ in the world to-day than ever before. Men are asking as never before, " What would Jesus do ? " The test being Christly character, no other age of all the millenniums was so glorious as this. But if the age is the noblest, it is because the voice of Christ calls the heroes of our times to action, because the hand of Jesus—that pierced hand—points out the path, thorny and rough, over which our feet must walk if we would

be partakers with him of his sufferings and share with him the glory of being builders of the Kingdom of God.

All things affirm, with the emphasis of a deep-toned and universal crescendo, the triumph of Jesus of Nazareth in his divine work as the Saviour of the world.

The character of Jesus is the sublimest vision of the ages, the noblest theme the All-Father has ever presented for the contemplation of the sons of men, who, through Jesus, have now become aware that they, too, are the sons of God.

The message of Jesus to us is an assurance of the tender love and perfect beauty of our God, illustrated in that picture of thrilling strength and grace which his own life affords. He is the demonstration to us of our right to become joint-heirs with himself of God's nature ; a convincing proof of the sovereignty of character over all the accidents of this life and the adventures of the life beyond.

Jesus was empowered by the Great Spirit to love the unloved, to help the helpless, to heal the broken-hearted, to refresh the weary and enrich the poor. He calls us also and says, "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." He expects us to be a light to those in darkness, brothers to the companionless, joy to the sad and rest to the weary. He expects us to save the people by bringing them to the source of power, humility and peace ; to save society by putting away unbrotherliness, tyranny and exclusiveness, and all unjust social and economic conditions. Our lips must speak the word of life, our eyes must look the light of love,

our bodies must incarnate the Christ. We must do away with the worldliness of this world ; but none of these things can we do till we have been empowered by the Spirit of the Father even as Jesus was.

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